

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



fall 1911

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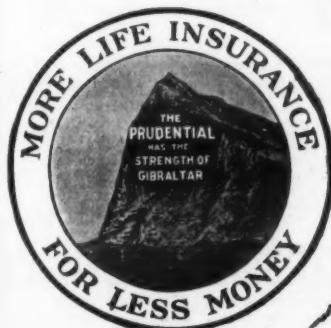
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Harold MacGrath

the title of which will be announced later.

This is the first time that a novel by Mr. MacGrath has been serialized and in the face of great competition and by paying a large price the publishers have succeeded in getting the author's consent to the publication of the story in Ainslee's. This is the same Mr. MacGrath who wrote "The Man on the Box," "Half a Rogue," "Hearts and Masks," "The Lure of the Mask," etc.

SECOND: *The enlargement of the magazine by the addition of sixteen pages.*

Besides Mr. MacGrath's serial the magazine will have the usual 160 pages of long and short fiction, making 176 pages in all.

THIRD: *Each instalment of Mr. MacGrath's story will be illustrated with reproductions in full colors of paintings by*

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AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

VOL. XXIII

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXIII.

FEBRUARY, 1909.

No. 1.

A DELEGATE OF DESTINY

BY JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

CHAPTER I.



RENDERGAST sighed deeply as he gazed out of the club window and thought upon the emptiness of existence. He had just read over for the fourth time Anthony

Hope's exhilarating tale "The Prisoner of Zenda," and it filled him with wrath to think that he had picked out a New York family to be born into, instead of some good old English clan into whose lives adventure of one kind or another might be expected to fall, provided they went the right way about getting into trouble.

"If my old college chum, Rudolf Rassendyll, had lived in this town," he muttered to himself, giving rein to his pessimism, "he'd have been handed down to posterity as a telephone number, instead of as the hero of a great and thrilling romance. If he had wanted to escape the dreariness of life in this metropolis would he have found his Ruritania in this country? Not on your life, he wouldn't. He'd have found plenty of Pennsylvania, but a short market on the other. He could have gone to Peekskill for a week, or sought refreshment in the spiritual joys of Boston, but there would have been no Princess Flavias lying around loose,

with a case of assorted villains in hot pursuit in either of those entertaining localities, and the last estate of that man would have been worse than the first."

"Ah, William," came a cheery voice at his side. "Still talking to yourself, eh?"

"Yes," said Prendergast. "I find I'm a first-class listener."

"Well, it's a bad habit," retorted the intruder. "Soliloquy is the advance-agent of Mr. Brain-Storm."

"So it would seem," laughed Prendergast. "I'd scarcely got started when you turned up."

Hardenburg grinned at the retort, and acknowledged its efficiency by summoning an attendant who shortly after returned with liquid evidences of his appreciation.

"What's the subject of the afternoon's debate?" Hardenburg asked. "I feel rather quarrelsome myself, and maybe if you advance your proposition we shall be able to work up a first-class scrap."

"Impossible," said Prendergast. "There aren't two sides to the proposition. I was merely saying that nothing like the Adventure of Rudolf Rassendyll could ever come into the life of a child of humdrum old Manhattan."

"That all?" said Hardenburg scornfully. "Well, all I've got to say is that you ought to be mighty glad it can't."

What the dickens do you want to go around looking for a crowd to fill you up with lead for?"

"I told you there wasn't any argument," said Prendergast wearily. "You admit right off the handle that this is a humdrum old town with no romance in it. The ticket-rack of the Pennsylvania Railroad, what's more, doesn't hold an inch of pasteboard that would take you to a place in this whole broad land where you could find a bit of exciting adventure. These are dull days, Hardy."

"William, you are talking foolishness," said Hardenburg. "No excitement in little old New York? Why, you must be crazy. Look at me. Whom do you suppose I met only an hour ago right in front of this club?"

"Give it up," said Prendergast.

"My tailor," ejaculated Hardenburg, "and I owe the duffer three hundred dollars. If that wasn't exciting I don't know what excitement is. You should have seen him."

Prendergast laughed.

"Oh, I suppose it was exciting in a way," he said, "but I don't see why it should be. You ought to be used to running into a creditor by this time, Jim."

"Sir, I shall never get used to creditors as long as I live," returned Hardenburg. "They get on my nerves, and I am so anxious to avoid them that I haven't walked up Fifth Avenue straight once in the past five years. When I get to Twenty-eighth Street and realize that Snip's shop is half-way up the block I tack over to Madison Avenue, and come back via Twenty-ninth, so that Snip shall not see me, and so it goes all the way up to here. Whenever I come to a block on which a creditor has his shop, I side-step, and the result is that I have to walk seven miles to cover three."

"And yet you do not pine for the days of D'Artagnan, and Athos, and Porthos?" laughed Prendergast. "Why, my dear fellow, you could have handled those creditors of yours without gloves in those old days of chivalry. Can you

imagine D'Artagnan walking around the corner to get away from a tailor?"

"Yes," said Hardenburg. "Why not? If he owed him money, and the chap was getting warm about it."

"Not he!" retorted Prendergast. "D'Artagnan would have walked up to the shop and gone in and ordered a brand-new doublet, and buskins galore, and if Mr. Snip had ventured to remind him that his little account was overdue he'd have grabbed him by the nose and flung him into the Seine."

"Yes, and had Bingham's rough-house squad camping on his neck within four hours," said Hardenburg. "Don't you fool yourself on that score, Billy."

"I'm not fooling myself on that score," said Prendergast. "On the contrary, I am lamenting the truth of what you say. You practically admit with me that the age of chivalry is dead. Romance has gone out of fashion, and a man could be all fifty-seven varieties of a knight these days and find every one of 'em out of a job. We are too confoundedly practical, and things have got so that even you consider that you have met with a remarkable adventure when you encounter a wrathy tailor on the street."

"You'd like it like the dickens if you were engaged to some nice girl," said Hardenburg, "and a cavalier dressed up to kill in a nickel frock-coat came galloping up to the church door the morning of your wedding, with a cry of 'What ho, within! By me halidome, bring forth the bride, and danged be he who claims her hand from Fitzrupert de Roy!' and forthwith grabbed the lady from your side and skiddoed over to Hoboken with her. I see you dropping all this romance language, my dear William, and ringing up the police-station for the reserves. You're a bully good fellow, Bilius, but you make a noise like a balloon when you talk."

Prendergast rose up from his chair, and tapped the bell for the attendant.

"Clear away those glasses, Simeon," he said, "and repeat the order. Don't be too long, either. I'm in a hurry."

"Dining out to-night?" asked Hardenburg.

"Yes," said Prendergast. "I know a man who is more sympathetic on the subject we have been discussing than you are. Fact is, our views are identical."

"If I could pay the bet by signing a club check I'd go you a fiver that you dine alone then," laughed Hardenburg.

"Forget it, old man," said Prendergast. "Here's how," he added, lifting his glass which the attendant had replenished. Hardenburg responded with the usual alacrity, and Prendergast started off.

"If you turn up missing to-morrow, William," Hardenburg called after him, "I'll tell the police to look for a man who buys his clothes of the Steel Trust. There's a popular impression in this burg that when a man is out looking for any particular kind of trouble he can find it. There's a potted knight coming your way."

Prendergast smiled pleasantly back at his facetious friend, and waved his hand in a parting salute.

"All right, Jim," he retorted. "And if you mysteriously disappear I'll set Bingham's sleuths on the trail of Snip."

"Humph!" ejaculated Hardenburg, settling back in his chair. "He's one of the salt of the earth, Billie Prendergast is, but great Heavens, what queer chaps these millionaires are! Here's little me could sleep like a baby o' nights on the income of a hundred-thousand, and he with his tens of thousands a year is in a state of misery because those beastly old days of chivalry have been wiped off the calendar. It's a darn queer world!"

Prendergast meanwhile had gone to the club library to restore "The Prisoner of Zenda" to his own particular niche therein, and after glancing over the evening newspaper summoned a boy.

"Order me a taxi," he said.

"We've just been trying to get one for Mr. Balestier, sir," said the boy, "but there isn't one to be had, sir."

"All right," said Prendergast. "Make it a hansom."

Now, as Hardenburg had said, this is a queer world. On such slight matters do our fortunes sometimes turn! To most of us it would seem to make very little difference in respect to the large events of life whether we rode up-town in a hansom or a taxicab, nor would Prendergast at the outset have believed that any part of his future career could be materially affected by the fact that Jim Hardenburg had proven unsympathetic in his attitude toward his views on the subject of the decadence of the days of chivalry, and yet upon these two things, both seemingly insignificant, hung the whole future life of William Prendergast. If Hardenburg had agreed with him he would doubtless have dined at the club instead of going elsewhere; and had he been able to secure a taxicab instead of a hansom—well, the things that happened, and that completely revolutionized his life, and that of many others as well, would have been very different.

"The hansom is at the door, Mr. Prendergast," said the boy, a few minutes later.

"Good—get my hat and coat," said Prendergast.

Three minutes after he left the club, and entered the hansom cab.

"Claremont, driver," he said as he mounted the step.

The jehu cracked his whip, and the Adventure was on.

CHAPTER II.

On his way went Prendergast, ostensibly to drown his sorrows over the seed-time of chivalry in a contemplation of the joys of mine host's planked shad at Claremont, on a spot that once rung to the musketry of a knightly army battling for that which we call freedom, little dreaming as he passed up the Riverside Drive and left the whirl of a great city behind him that not for many a long day would he return to the haunts wherein he had been a familiar figure for years.

Had a fortune-teller ventured for a bit of ready silver to say to him that before that night had passed a dark man would do him an ill turn, and a fair girl, who would one day appeal to him and not in vain for such a service as would give him forever a claim upon her gratitude, if not upon that which we hold even dearer, would cross his path, Prendergast would have dismissed the gipsy as a Romany unworthy of credit, so little did he suspect the things that a pranksome fate held in store for him.

It was shortly after six when the hansom turned in at the broad sweep of road leading to the entrance of the Claremont Hotel, too early in the evening for such life as the place afforded at this season of the year, but not too early for the pleasures of a gastronomic sort which he had promised himself.

Alighting from the cab he took from the attendant at the door the usual carriage-check, and bade the driver wait, and while waiting, eat to his heart's content. He mounted the steps, and walked around the glass-enclosed piazza to the river-front, and seated himself at a table, whence he could see the silver Hudson stretching its broad length northward, to lose itself in the serpentine windings of its bed as it twisted about the promontory at Inwood.

Opposite on the other side of the river were the heights of New Jersey, and as the sun gradually effaced itself beyond them he could see now and again the little jets of light that showed that here and there there were blissful young couples who had heeded the advice given them by enterprising land-boomers in the real estate columns of the daily papers, and now owned their own homes. Below the level of Grantwood's huge electric sign asking New York couples who spooned on the borders of Riverside Park, in sparkling letters of gold, nine feet high, why they paid rent, he perceived the graceful lines of a fair-sized yacht, anchored not far out in the stream from the One-hundred and Twenty-fifth Street pier, tugging at her iron cables in the flow

of the tide and the river current, like a hound in leash ready to be off; and for a moment he thought of his own little steamer over in the East River, and wished that he had gone aboard of her, and taken a run up the Sound, instead of coming here.

"What yacht is that in the river there?" he asked of the head waiter who had come to take his order. "I can't make out her flag—if she's got any."

"I don't know, sir," replied the waiter. "She only dropped in a half an hour ago, and as far as we can make out she hasn't shown any colors."

"Can you make out the name on her stern?" asked Prendergast.

"No, sir," returned the waiter. "The clerk in the office tried to a little while ago, with his field-glass, but they seem to have covered it up."

"Looks like a comfortable craft," said Prendergast. "I wouldn't mind taking a cruise on board of her myself."

Poor Prendergast! What a prayer, and how soon to be answered!

His dinner order given Prendergast yielded himself up to a contemplation of the beauties by which he was surrounded, and there was that in the soft balmy air of the early spring evening that lent added poignancy to his romantic reflections and inclinations. So absorbed was he in his musings that when the steaming platter containing the luscious work of art that is served at Claremont to those who have the sense to order planked shad in the days when that toothsome creature is running fresh in the river, and is caught in the seines of the hotel proprietors themselves, to be almost instantly served up to the hungry diners-out, the waiter had to address him twice before receiving his instructions to go ahead and serve it. Nor later did he at first observe a very unusual commotion, or hear a cry from without when a great touring-car came plowing too rapidly around the turn with, as it afterward proved, disastrous results.

Prendergast mused on until a general rush of the other diners to the steps

of the hotel aroused in him a more or less languid interest.

"What's the row?" he asked of the waiter after the excitement had abated somewhat.

"Another drunken chauffeur," the waiter replied. "He came around the curve too sharp and smashed the rail."

"Anybody hurt?" asked Prendergast.

"I don't know, yet," replied the waiter, "but I am afraid there is. Somebody yelled as if he was hurt, and a couple of cabbies were sitting on the rail just a minute before the car smashed into it."

"It's a shame the careless way some of these devils have!" said Prendergast indignantly. "If I had my way they'd make it a penal offense for a chauffeur to touch whisky, or any other kind of stuff with alcohol in it—though I suppose a law of that kind would drive the cusses to drinking gasoline."

The desk clerk appeared as Prendergast spoke, and standing in the opening of one of the French windows of the hotel called aloud.

"Has any gentleman here got carriage-check number three hundred and seven?" he asked.

Prendergast went down into his pockets and fished up his check and glanced at the number. It was three hundred and seven.

"Yes," he said. "I have it. I told my driver he could have his supper."

"It isn't that, sir," said the clerk gravely, coming to Prendergast's table. "I am sorry to say that there has been an accident outside, and one of the cabbies has been hurt. We don't know how seriously yet, but we found this check in his hat. I am afraid it is your man, sir."

"Poor devil!" said Prendergast, rising. "I'll go out and see."

He seized his hat and followed the clerk into the office of the hotel, where the suffering cabman was stretched out on the floor. It took only a glance from Prendergast to confirm not only his fears as to the man's identity, but to see that the poor fellow was so badly injured as well that it was a case for the hospital.

"Better call an ambulance," he said quickly. "He appears to be pretty thoroughly smashed up."

"We have already done so," said the clerk. "It ought to be here in a minute."

It was an underestimate of the ambulance driver's capacity to cover the ground, for even as the clerk spoke the bell of the hospital car was heard in the distance, and in a moment the vehicle and its crew arrived. Prendergast was much relieved to learn from the young surgeon in charge, after a hasty examination of the suffering man, that while his injuries were painful, and such as would keep him out of business for a month or more, they were not necessarily serious.

"There's my card, doctor," said Prendergast. "I shall regard it as a special favor if you will see that this poor chap is given every attention. If anything is needed to make him comfortable, let him have it and I'll pay the shot."

"All right, Mr. Prendergast," said the youngster. "I shall be very glad to do as you say. Billy Prendergast of Yale?"

"I was before I reformed," grinned Prendergast.

"Same here," said the doctor. "I'm Rodney, ninety-seven."

"Fine!" said Prendergast, shaking the other by the hand. "Ring me up at the Athenaeum to-morrow and let me know how this chap progresses, will you?"

"With pleasure, and say, Prendergast," the young doctor continued, "hadn't you better get the number of that gas-wagon? There's no reason why these duffers who employ boozefriends for chauffeurs shouldn't pony up when they knock a fellow out this way."

"Rodney, you are the most thoughtful medicine-man I ever met," said Prendergast. "I'll camp on the fellow's trail to-night, and if I catch him I'll squeeze him for a couple of yellowbacks for this poor cabby."

The two parted, and the ambulance with much clanging of bells made off

to the hospital, while Prendergast returned to his dinner.

"Who was that drunken chauffeur? Anybody know?" he asked.

The head waiter of whom the question was asked glanced uneasily at him.

"It wasn't a chauffeur, sir," he fidgeted. "The car was driven by its owner, sir."

"The beastly old rascal!" exclaimed Prendergast. "And he never even waited to see if he had hurt that poor devil?"

"Oh, he slipped a five-dollar bill into his pocket, sir, before he rode away," said the waiter.

"Well, that'll do for a payment on account. I'll call on the old skinflint to-morrow and collect the rest," retorted Prendergast. "Who was he, do you know?"

"I forgot his name," shuffled the waiter, "but his number was either 9073 N. J. or 3276 N. Y. or something like that, sir."

"Good," said Prendergast. "There's nothing like accurate information like that to enable a chap to track a villain to his lair. When I've landed my man I'll see that you get your share of the reward."

Prendergast returned to his planked shad which was now become a cold and gloomy ruin, but there were other things that made the remainder of the meal adequate to the demands of his appetite, and when he had got to the end, and the waiter had brought him his check, barring his sympathy for the distressful condition of the driver who had been taken away in the ambulance, he was at peace with the world, and then on a sudden he was plunged into the midst of that thing that had been lurking around for all these twenty-five years of his life waiting for the psychological moment in which to catch him.

"By the way, sir," said the head waiter, "the man in charge of the stable wants to know where to send your hansom, sir."

"By Jove!" cried Prendergast. "I'd forgotten all about that."

"We can have it driven down-town,

sir, or if you prefer, we can send to the stable where you got it and have them send up for it," said the head waiter.

And then there flashed across the mind of Prendergast a brilliant idea.

"Never mind that," he said, accepting instantaneously the suggestion of the Prince of Darkness. "I think it would be kind of a lark to drive the thing home myself."

"You, sir?" demanded the head waiter, aghast at the idea.

"Certainly, why not?" said Prendergast. "I've always felt that I'd like to drive a hansom cab, and I don't believe I shall ever get a better chance than this."

"I guess he's another one of them brain-stormers, Henri," said the head waiter to his assistant, as Prendergast, having paid his bill, went out and climbed up into the driver's seat on the waiting hansom.

CHAPTER III.

Blissfully unconscious of the stir he was making among the leaders of activity indoors and out at Claremont, Prendergast mounted the high seat of his new acquisition, and bowed merrily out of the café grounds feeling very much like a bird. The little rumble seat at the rear of the hansom, having no visible means of support, contributed to this larklike sensation when he glanced back of him and downward, observing nothing between himself and the hard surface of the highway, so that he seemed to be scudding along through the air.

Occasionally as the cab jounced over a rough spot in the road the amateur jehu instinctively reached forward and grabbed the nickeled rail that ran around the edges of the cab roof to keep himself from falling overboard, and bringing his adventure to an inglorious conclusion; but what contributed most to the excitement of the incident was the fact that there being no one inside the cab to assist in maintaining its balance his own avoirdupois so weighted down his end of the ve-

hicle that he could see very little of the horse he was supposed to be driving. It was almost as if he had been shot out of a cannon to travel indefinitely through space.

"Talk about your sport!" he chortled gleefully as the cab lurched over a thank-you-marm. "If this doesn't combine everything there is from ballooning to yachting I don't know what does. I fancy a fellow with a little imagination could get seasick in one of these things if he wanted to. If I could only see the horse I'd like it a little better," he added. "He must be there, or we shouldn't be going along at this rate."

He reached forward and opened the little skylight in the cab roof. Then he peered down through it, and a broad smile wreathed his countenance.

"Yes," he said. "He's there. I can see his tail switching in the moonlight, with an occasional glimpse of his haunches, and over the top I can see his ears," he went on, straightening himself up and craning his neck a little in order to increase the area of his vision. "I suppose that is all one needs to see of a horse anyhow," he mused. "If you can see his ears and his tail and they are all right it is a pretty safe guess that the rest of the horse is somewhere in between and doing as well as can be expected."

He drove on ecstatically happy, and for the first time in the whole interminable length of a day given over to dissatisfaction forgot to lament the passing of the days of chivalry. At last he had found something that gave him a new and delightful sensation, and he was enjoying it to the full, when in the midst of his happy reflections he was hailed by a gruff voice from the sidewalk.

"Hi there, cabby," it said. "Are you engaged?"

Now here was a case in point to show how little imagination our would-be knights of to-day are blessed with. The possibility of being hired had never occurred to Prendergast. Nevertheless he was a man of quick decisions, and it did not take him long to make up

his mind what was the proper answer to a query of this kind. Hastily reining in his steed and drawing up to the curb, he answered:

"No, sir."

"All right," said the other. "I'd like you for an hour or two. Get in, Mary."

The speaker was difficult to size up in the light of the moon, but Prendergast could see that he was a man who had passed the middle years of life, was well but unobtrusively dressed, and spoke like a man of education. It was evident, too, from his manner of speaking that he was accustomed to giving orders. There was a tone of finality about him that seemed to indicate that he was used to being obeyed. As for the woman at his side Prendergast was unable to make out at first glance whether she was young or old, for she was heavily veiled, but as she entered the hansom there was a lightness about her step that suggested youth. He was able to see that she was in the full enjoyment of a tasteful dressmaker, and when he heard her speak, which she did as she seated herself in the cab, he found her voice melodious and pleasing.

"We must not go far," she said. "Indeed I'd very much prefer that you took me to Mrs. Bartlett's at once."

"No doubt," retorted the man, "but I must have a talk with you now. It won't do to-morrow or the day after. Too much depends on your decision."

"Where to, sir?" asked Prendergast, calling through the little skylight in the top of the cab, skilfully imitating the speech of the cabbies who had so often made the same inquiry of him under similar conditions.

"Around the park," said the man inside, "and you needn't kill your horse either. Look out for the automobiles going around the turns."

"Very good, sir," returned Prendergast, clapping the top of the skylight down. Giving the horse a flick with the whip they were off.

Prendergast's grin lengthened to the full capacity of his lips and cheeks combined.

"Oh, I don't know," he chuckled.

"Maybe little Willie Prendergast isn't the cutest little cabby on the pike! Wonder what old Jim Hardenburg would say if he could see me now! Gad! And to think that I have been blackguarding little old New York all day as a regular Pompeii for adventure!"

As they entered the park at the One-hundred and Tenth Street entrance a new obsession entered Prendergast's mind. He could not escape an insistent curiosity to know who and what his fares were, and what they were talking about, and he was on the point of lifting the skylight again for the purpose of satisfying his curiosity, when he pulled himself up short with the question:

"Avast, there, William! What *are* you anyhow, a cabman or a gentleman?"

The appeal was effective, and he sheered off from the impulse of the moment. Whatever he was destined to learn about the couple inside must of course come to him, either the long way around by way of the dashboard, or by the slightly shorter route through the generously wide side-windows of the cab.

When they had penetrated only a short distance into the park, and had got away from the inevitable, though unnecessary noises of the town, it was with a certain degree of satisfaction that he observed that he couldn't help hearing what was being said within, especially when it was the man who spoke, for it was quite evident that he was put out about something, and made no bones about talking rather more loudly than was necessary. What was even more evident to the amateur jehu up-stairs was that the low silvery ripple, which was the only figure that in his judgment could adequately describe the sweetness of the woman's voice, instead of soothing her companion, as it would any ordinarily decent man, seemed to make him all the less pleased with the results of their conversation. Unfortunately Prendergast was unable to catch more than an occasional word of hers, her end of the interview prov-

ing to be in the main hardly more than a musical little murmur.

"I don't see why you persist in your refusal," the man was saying, as they ambled along the road leading over to Magowan's Pass. "It will help me mightily and it won't hurt you."

Silvery ripple from the lady.

"Oh, confound her!" retorted the man, laying considerable stress on the word *her*. "She's stood in my way ever since—well, by thunder, Mary, I don't know when she hasn't been in my way. What's more, she hasn't anything to do with this matter. It doesn't belong to her—not a penny of it. It belongs to you, and to nobody else. What's the use of dragging her in?"

Protracted series of tiny silver wavelets from the lady, acting apparently like cold water on the man inside, and whetting Prendergast's curiosity to the extreme limit of the law.

"Perfect tommyrot!" retorted the man angrily, as the ripples faded away. "If he had wanted her to have it he'd have given it to her. That's clear enough, isn't it?"

Apparently it was not clear enough, for immediately a musical note of dissent rose from within and fell upon Prendergast's ear.

"Injustice?" cried the man. "How do you know that? Because she told you so—that's how. In other words, Mr. Sharpless for many years one of the shrewdest old merchants in this town didn't know his business, is guilty of an injustice to his daughter, which you in your infinite wisdom are now going to set right and by a foolish act defeat the very object he had in mind when he disposed of his fortune as he did."

"Oho!" thought Prendergast. "Old Pennywise Sharpless, eh? The plot thickens. I am on the track."

"He must have thought something of me—or he wouldn't have done it," the man was saying as Prendergast's slight diversion into independent reflection came to an end.

The woman within laughed unpleasantly at this, Prendergast thought. At any rate, the remark seemed to inspire

her with a good many ideas, for the silvery ripple at this point took on some of the proportions of a torrential wave, and it continued on the right of way it seemed suddenly to have acquired for some little time.

"You needn't call her that creature," growled the man at last, interrupting the speaker angrily. "She's a damned sight better——"

Whether it was the startling use of profanity or not that caused it I do not know, but the girl's voice now became metallic indeed and her words were no longer indistinguishable to Prendergast.

"You needn't say any more," she interrupted him quickly. "We shall never be able to agree on anything if we begin on that subject. I am sorry I mentioned Mrs. Willoughby, but you must admit that you provoked me into it. You haven't had to sit around all day, and every day, year in and year out, watching a woman you loved with your whole soul eating her heart out with the mortification to which she has been subjected by the one person in all the world who should have been her protector. You have gone your prosperous way, and men consider you successful—no doubt you are successful—and you have had a good time in the world, but the tragedy of it all you have shifted to her shoulders, and I cannot forget it."

"You're a sentimental little idiot," was the response. "Even if you decline to do what I ask for my sake you're a fool not to do it for yourself. Opportunities like this don't happen every day."

"You have had your answer," said the girl coldly. "I shall be there on the tenth of June, and you will have to be ready for me."

"Very well, then," said the man, with an icy cruelty in his tones, "what can't be done in one way must be done in another. I had hoped to find you reasonable."

There was an ugly note in his voice that grated on Prendergast, and if an opportunity had arisen for him to get down from his high seat and thrash

the gentleman he would have done so with alacrity. Indeed he was much inclined on general principles to do it anyhow. He was not at all sure that the girl was not the most aggravating little minx in the world, nor had he any real reason for believing that she had any more right on her side than the man, but just on the general principles of chivalry which require a knightly person to knock out another knightly person whom he finds abusing a lone lorn lady, and inquire why he does it afterward, he felt inclined to act. The girl apparently was still capable of holding her own, however, for in a moment her voice lapsing back into the unbearable began to ripple again.

The response was sufficiently startling as it rang out on the night.

"Oh, damn your mother!" cried the man.

"Gee!" muttered Prendergast.

"Take me home—take me to Mrs. Bartlett at once," said the girl, her voice fairly trembling with tears.

"I'll take you home, all right," retorted the man sullenly. "To the home where you really belong."

A long silence followed and Prendergast drove on wondering why the order to go somewhere was not forthcoming. Instinctively he guided the horse to the southward, but as he came to the mall the little skylight in the roof of the cab was suddenly thrown open.

"Drive as fast as you can, driver, to the Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street Pier, North River," the man inside called up to him excitedly. "Don't let any grass grow under your feet either—this young woman has fainted."

"Darned queer address," thought Prendergast, as he whipped up his horse; and then his mind reverted to the plight of the other occupant of the cab. "Shall I stop at a drug-store?" he inquired solicitously, opening the skylight and peering in.

"No, confound you! Do what you are told to do, and do it quick," the man snapped back at him roughly. "And close up that hole!"

"This is getting decidedly interesting," muttered Prendergast, turning to

the work in hand, a deep frown furrowing his brow as the picture of the young girl lying limp in the cab below lingered in his mind. "I'm no chemist, but if that wasn't chloroform I smelt just now, I'll eat my hat!"

CHAPTER IV.

For a would-be knight errant Prendergast found his heart action rather swift as he drove over to the nearest exit from the park. He was morally convinced by that faint suggestion of chloroform that there was some queer business afoot, but as to his right to interfere he was not so sure. For all he knew, whatever had been done inside there by the person whom he suspected of being the villain of his little adventure had been forced upon the offender by circumstances over which he had no control. One of his first impulses was to drive to the nearest police-station and let the officer in charge decide upon what was proper to be done.

If, as he suspected, a villainous act had been perpetrated under his very nose, and he could prove it, it would make very gratifying reading for him in the next morning's papers, and the chances of his becoming a nine days' celebrity were not at all bad. But, second thought suggested, suppose the girl had really fainted and that everything connected with the extraordinary incident were to turn out not only not extraordinary but positively correct—what kind of a figure in that event would he cut in the press the next day, particularly in the saffron-hued press always on the alert for some sensation in which the members of his set were conspicuously involved? He could almost see those flaring head-lines that would be printed at his expense in the five-o'clock sporting extras—letters two inches high announcing that

ANOTHER CLUBMAN GOES ON THE RAMPAGE.

A Member of the Smart Set Drives a Hansom in the Park.

LANDS HIS FARES AT THE POLICE-STATION.

Clearly this would prove very uncomfortable. He would forevermore be a marked man in the city as the leading cabman of the four hundred, and Hardenburg and the rest of the guys at the club would never let him hear the end of it. For all he knew he might even be mugged by the police, and then nothing short of a special act of the legislature could get his portrait out of the Rogues' Gallery.

"There's no use in rushing matters, anyhow," he muttered to himself. "It may happen that these people live over in Jersey somewhere. By Jove!" he added. "That's it. They want the Fort Lee Ferry. Why didn't I think of that before—and if they take me across with them and there's any lonely road business involved I'll give the old duffer what's coming to him."

Prendergast chirked up materially as he thought of this possibility. He began hoping that they would take him across, for he would then follow a certain line of action on the lonely roads himself, to which nobody could take the least exception. For instance, when they got far enough into the unsettled corner-lot district he would get down from his throne and put the question squarely up to the lady, who would probably have been revived by the short trip across the Hudson, as to whether she wished to be rescued or not. If all was well with her he would apologize for his intrusion, and there was a bare chance that while the man would be very angry for a moment, in the end he would see that Prendergast was acting only as a thoughtful man would act; while on the other hand if things were wrong, as he suspected they were, he would give the masculine contingent a good sound thrashing, and drive the lady back to town, leaving the victim of his prowess to foot it home.

He became positively joyful over the prospect, and as he drew nearer and nearer the pier he arranged in his mind all the details of the conversation that would ensue in either case, and had even got so far as to settle upon the precise kind of an uppercut he would hand his adversary when the crucial

moment came, when it occurred to him that he would better make sure that the man had meant the Fort Lee Ferry, and not the pier, before going any farther with his preparations. With this in mind he again raised the little skylight and called down:

"You mean the Fort Lee Ferry, don't you?"

"No, you confounded jackass, I don't. I mean the pier. Can't you get that through your thick skull?" was the gracious response.

"Thank you, sir," said Prendergast, for all the world like a real cabby, slamming the skylight to with a bang. "I'll put a little more power into my elbow for that when the time comes," he added.

A few minutes later the cab rolled down the hill, onto the pier. Prendergast guided his horse to the farther end where there was a landing-stage. In the flickering glare of a big electric light by which the pier was illuminated he could see a young man standing by the string-piece, while off in the distance, still at anchor, lay the yacht that had excited his admiration and interest when he had first seen her from the piazza of the hotel on the heights. She was dark save for the red and green lights fore and aft. The cab drew up at the landing-stage, and the man within jumped quickly out.

"That you, Clarence?" he cried sharply, addressing the young man.

"Yes," replied the other. "Any news?"

"Plenty—all bad," said the elder man. "She refuses. Is the boat here?"

"Yes," said the other. "We'd almost given you up."

"I tried my best to persuade her, and it has taken a long time to find out that she can't be persuaded," said the elder. "She'll change her mind maybe to-morrow when she finds that I mean business. Pay this idiot of a cab-driver and let's get away."

Clarence gave a long whistle repeated three times, and a dory rowed by two men drew up at the landing-stage out of the shadows of the pier inshore. He then turned to Prendergast.

"How much, driver?" he asked.

"Seven dollars and a half," said Prendergast, using the first figures that came into his mind, but keeping an eye on his passenger the while, who was now busily engaged in assisting the girl out of the hansom. She seemed dazed, and tottered as her feet rested on the pier floor, and then she collapsed.

"You'll have to lend a hand here, Clarence," said the elder, as the girl fell over into his arms.

Clarence, who had handed Prendergast a twenty-dollar bill, immediately turned, and the two men lifted the girl down the steps and laid her in the stern of the dory. Prendergast felt that the moment for action had come, but even now he was uncertain of what he ought to do. There were four men, counting those in the dory, against him, and it was difficult for him to see how he could now get the girl out of the boat without drowning everybody, even if he were foolhardy enough to make the attempt against such odds. He got down from his cab seat, however, resolved to do something.

"I can't change this," he said, holding out the twenty-dollar bill. "I ain't the Bank of England."

"Well you don't have to," returned the young man. "Just keep the change, and you can earn it by keeping your mouth shut, see?"

"Come on, Clarence," called the elder man from the dory. "There's no time to lose. Did you pay the cabby?"

"Yes," said Clarence. "I gave him his fare and a good bunch of money to keep his mouth shut."

"You damned little fool!" was the angry retort. "What did you do that for?"

"A few dollars won't hurt you," returned the youngster sullenly.

"It isn't that, you crazy ass," roared the fare. "What is there for him to keep his mouth shut about? Can't a man board his own yacht at this hour of the night without having to make a mystery of it? See here, you," he added, mounting to the pier again, and addressing Prendergast. "This young man has made a mistake. I don't give

a whoop in Hades for the twenty dollars—it might have been a hundred for all I care—but there is no reason why he should try to buy your silence."

"I know that," said Prendergast dryly. "Fact is, my silence isn't for sale."

"Why should it be?" said the ex-fare, with a nervous attempt at a laugh. "You cabmen know your business. I guess if a half-dozen of you should start in to tell all you know about some folks it would make pretty good reading."

"Maybe it would," said Prendergast. "Maybe some of us will try it some time, too, when these taxis have put us out of business—but as a rule we aren't low-down enough for that. Some of us have some conscience."

"Well, I'm glad I've found one of them," grinned the other. "Give me your number so that I won't forget you."

"You won't forget me," said Prendergast. "I'll take care of that. Fact is, we aren't going to say good-by just yet."

"Oh, aren't we?" sneered the other.

"No," said Prendergast coolly. "I want to know what's going on here. I may be all kinds of a fool for butting in, and maybe you think a cab-driver can't fight about anything but the size of his tip, but as for me, I've been out looking for a scrap all day, and I don't stand for what's going on here. It looks crooked."

"What do you mean by 'what's going on here'?" demanded the other.

"You know what I mean as well as I do," retorted Prendergast. "Where are you taking that woman?"

"Now, look here, my friend," said the other, biting off his words incisively as he spoke, "just take my advice for once, and climb up onto that little perch of yours and skip. I'm something of a fighter myself, and I take very little back talk from anybody, and not a bit from cab-drivers! If you want to get off this pier with a whole skin, go now; and let me tell you before we part that if you try to make

trouble for me based upon what you think you know, you will find that my arm is pretty nearly as long as the district attorney's, and by God, I'll reach out and grab you! And when I grab a man—"

Here the speaker paused to catch his breath, leaving the unutterable rest to Prendergast's imagination.

"There's no time like the present," snapped the latter, throwing off his coat. "Just reach out and grab."

"Oh, you're drunk," retorted the other impatiently. "Now look here—what's the use of kicking up a row about this very simple matter? I don't want a row, and I am sure you don't. What I am doing I have a right to do. That young woman there is my daughter. Her home for the present is on my yacht, and I am taking her there. I can see that you are not a bad fellow at all, and if you were quite sober you'd probably be one of the best fellows in the world, and would know enough to mind your own business. Now let's call it square. If I have said anything to offend you I apologize. What more can I do than that?"

Prendergast was slightly taken aback by this sudden change of front, and unfortunately, or perhaps I should rather say fortunately, took the altered manner of his adversary as an exhibition of cowardice.

"You can do a lot more," he replied fiercely. "You can explain what all this mysterious business means. If everything is all right, as you say it is, it ought to be easy of explanation. I am not to be bullied or jolted."

"And do you think for a moment that I will admit your right to demand an explanation from me?" demanded the other.

"No, I don't," said Prendergast. "But it won't take five minutes for us to call a policeman, and put your explanation up to him. I don't represent anybody but myself, but he would represent the law, and it's my private opinion that this is a case where the law should step in. If he says go along and take that girl with you, go along and take her, but until some one

who has some authority does say that, by Jingo, I'll see that——”

“Well you *are* drunk,” said the other. “And what's more you are getting cursed tiresome. Stand aside there. Get out of my way.”

Prendergast, during this colloquy, had managed to get in between his adversary and the landing-stage. Meanwhile the youngster, Clarence, had mounted the steps and was now confronting him.

“Oh, hit him one, governor,” said the youth. “Or let me. We can't stand for this sort of thing, you know.”

“Hang onto yourself, Clarence,” growled the older man. “This is my affair. The fool wants a brawl, and I don't intend that he shall have it.”

Turning to Prendergast, he continued.

“Now my man,” he said, “I'll give you just one more chance. Will you leave peaceably, or won't you?”

“I stick!” retorted Prendergast, and as he spoke he struck out straight from the shoulder, but the other was too quick for him and jumped to one side, while Prendergast lurching about in pursuit missed his mark altogether, stumbled forward, and falling headlong over the side of the pier, plunged down into the black waters of the river.

CHAPTER V.

When Prendergast opened his eyes again he found himself in strangely unfamiliar quarters, and his head was fairly splitting with pain. Moreover, it was bound about with a bandage that was not altogether free from blood-stains. What on earth did it all mean anyhow, and what was it that kept his bed from standing still? For in addition to all the other odd features of the situation everything about him seemed to be straining, and creaking, and wabbling.

By slow degrees and after much painful prodding of his memory the story of last night's adventure unfolded itself to him, and it ran along pretty clearly up to a certain point, and there it stopped altogether. There was noth-

ing in what he could recall to account for these extraordinary surroundings.

With difficulty he rose up, and peered about him. What he saw was not at all reassuring—an uncarpeted floor, a low-ceiled room crossed longitudinally with heavy beams, and three little bull's-eye port-holes through which a dull gray light was feebly streaming, and every two or three seconds a heavy splash of dark green water would cover these, and shut out the light.

And then he realized the truth. He was on the high seas, and this was the mysterious yacht that had lain at anchor in the Hudson, and he in common with the distressed lady fair had been kidnaped by her villainous pursuer!

“I wonder how in thunder they got me,” he muttered. “I don't seem to have put up much of a fight.”

As he ruminated upon this matter the door of the cabin opened, and two sailors entered.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” said Prendergast, as genially as he could under the circumstances. “Good deal of a sea on, I gather.”

The men both laughed.

“Think so?” said one of them, with a chuckle. “Well, you take my word for it, my friend, you'll think this is a balmy day in June alongside of the weather you'll get when the old man's had his breakfast.”

“I'd rather tackle one o' them South Sea typhoons in a catboat than be sailin' in your shoes,” said the other. “You gave the colonel a pile o' trouble last night, young feller, an' he ain't used to it, leastways not from cab-drivers.”

“Me?” asked Prendergast innocently. “What did I do?”

“It'd be easier to tell ye what ye didn't do,” replied the sailor. “If there was anything ye overlooked along the line o' raisin' the devil with the old man, I can't guess the name of it. Wonder to me he didn't let ye drown.”

“Drown?” echoed Prendergast. “Who was going to drown me?”

“Your own foolishness,” was the reply. “Ye know ye fell overboard, don't ye?”

"Well, what if I did?" retorted Prendergast, although he had no recollection of the fact, "I can swim."

"Ye was past swimmin' when we fished ye out," said the sailor. "When ye fell off the pier ye struck your head on the gunwale o' the dory, and it put ye out o' commission. The young feller was for lettin' ye go at that, too, but old Willoughby drew the line there. He ain't figgerin' on no mortality this trip—not unless the other feller insists on dyin'."

"You must o' had a peach of a load on," said the other sailor. "Must ha' been pretty slick stuff to screw your courage up to makin' a row with Willoughby just because he wanted to take his darter out sailin'."

"I didn't know she was his daughter," said Prendergast, turning a trifle cold inside as he thought of the possibility, now become a probability, that he had made a fool of himself.

"Well, if ye'd been sober ye might ha' thought to find out before offerin' to leave the lady's identity to a New York cop, and then wantin' to lick her father for not tellin' ye all about his family affairs," the man suggested.

"Oh, well," said Prendergast, assuming a cheerfulness that he did not really feel, "I guess you know what a fellow will do when he has had a first-class dinner, and isn't afraid of trouble anyhow."

"I has eat that kind occasional," chuckled the sailor, "but if I thought I was like to run up agin' the kind o' food an' drink that'd set me to tamperin' with old John Willoughby's private wires, I think I'd rather ask the cop to take me to some convenient dippy-house before the fit come on. Eh, Bill?"

"Righto, Sam," said the other, with an emphatic nod of acquiescence. "As between that and shakin' hands with a buzz-saw in business hours, give me the buzz."

"I don't suppose you fellows know what was done with my horse?" observed Prendergast.

The two sailors looked at each other and laughed.

"The gent has mislaid a hoss, Sam," said Bill. "Ain't seen nothin' that looks like a hoss on deck, hev ye?"

"No," returned Sam, "th' only thing I've seed aboard that looks like a hoss is the jackass we brought on deck last night, and in the cold light o' th' early mornin' he don't look much like a hoss at that."

Prendergast, for all his misgivings and sufferings, laughed outright at this diplomatic allusion to himself, and made himself solid with his two new companions by handing them each a cigar. They were pretty wet cigars after the soaking they had received when he and they had gone down into the waters of the Hudson together, but as evidences of good-will they proved effective.

"Thanky," said Sam. "I had a sort of idee that you wasn't a bad feller when ye was in your right mind, and I don't mind tellin' ye that the worst thing old Willoughby has agin' you is that you was drunk. If ye ain't above takin' a bit of advice from an old feller that's been through the mill, don't forget that you was full, and empty your mind of everything else. See?"

"That's good advice, young feller," said Bill. "Your game is that ye don't know what happened. Far as that goes, a rarin' hoss could ha' dumped ye off that there cab o' yours into the water, and if I was you when Colonel Willoughby asks ye any questions about it, an' I remembered anything at all, it would be suthin' to that effect."

Whether this was really good advice or not, it at least struck Prendergast as worthy of consideration, although he had little doubt that if he should reveal his identity to his captor, as far as his own skin was concerned, he was safe. He was not at all convinced, however, that the safety of his own skin was the sum total of his solicitude. His ardor for adventure had cooled somewhat now that he found himself in a fair way to get it in good stiff doses; but there still remained the welfare of the girl, like himself, undoubtedly, an unwilling prisoner upon this yacht.

If she were a willing voyager, why

the chloroform? Why all this mystery of the embarkation late at night after the quarrel in the cab, and most of all why the young man's anxiety to buy his silence? For Prendergast was not dull enough to be deceived by Colonel Willoughby's contention that he had nothing to conceal. This then was what he had to decide upon, and to decide quickly.

It was now well on past eight o'clock, and it was not likely that after the events of the night before the colonel would delay many hours before satisfying himself as to his identity. It was a knotty problem for Prendergast, and none the less so because now that he knew who the man was against whom he had so fortuitously pitted himself the night before, he knew that he had a foeman who had made no mistake when he had boasted that his arm was pretty nearly as long as the district attorney's. Indeed, there were people in New York who had for years suspected that John Willoughby's arm was longer than the district attorney's, and that with a certain element of the politicians back of him there was not much in the way of underground rascality that he was incapable of putting through, once he set about it.

The known character of the man he had chosen to quarrel with was at once the most cogent argument for letting him alone, and also for suspecting him of a kind of villainy which forbade that he should be left to his own devices by any one pretending to have a dash of the adventurer's blood in his veins.

But the girl—she apparently was the man's daughter. That was the singular, and the difficult feature of this case. If it were a case of kidnaping, as it seemed to be, can a man kidnap his own child? And in case the person removed from the custody of one person and placed in the hands of another is abducted by her own parent, how far is a rank outsider justified in taking a hand in the game?

With such pressing questions in his mind, Prendergast got out of his bunk, and tottered to the cabin door.

"I guess I'll go up on deck, and get

a little fresh air in my lungs. It's stuffy down here," he said.

"There's another guess comin' to ye," returned Sam, standing between him and the threshold. "The day's orders is that ye ain't to go out o' the forecastle till they've sent for ye."

"What the devil is that for?" demanded Prendergast. "I'm not a prisoner, am I?"

"Well, we're not more'n a hundred miles out to sea, sonny," grinned Sam, "and most likely the colonel's afraid ye'll try to walk ashore and get your feet wet. This here ocean o' Willoughby's is pretty derned damp at this season o' the year, an' there don't seem to be no way o' drainin' it so's to make the walkin' tol'able. B'sides, your breakfast ain't come yet."

Prendergast sat down on the edge of his bunk and gazed hopelessly at his jailers. This was a little more than he had bargained for. On land it might have been different. He might bore his way to freedom on land, but on the sea it was a different proposition. A watery grave awaited him on the outside of those prison walls.

Fortunately a diversion presented itself at this moment that took the mind of our forlorn adventurer off his immediate sufferings, in the shape of a good breakfast, and Prendergast found that the coffee, a hot steaming bowl of which was handed him by the steward, was stimulating to his slowly weakening knees, and had a most improving effect as well upon his spine, which was sadly in need of stiffening.

"Ah, but that is good!" he muttered to himself as he swallowed it, and then, thanks to its revivifying effect, he found his old time truculence returning, and instead of misgivings, he now looked forward to his meeting with the redoubtable Willoughby with eager interest.

"Bring on your colonel," he said, with a wink at Sam. "I'll have him for dessert."

The order was instantly obeyed, for even as Prendergast spoke a voice from above came thundering down the hatchway.

"Hi, there, Bill," it said. "Is that there cab-driver up yet?"

"Yes," said Bill.

"Well bring him into the cabin. The colonel wants him."

"Come along, sonny," said Sam. "Your dessert is waitin' to be served, an' may the Lord have mercy on your soul."

And well guarded by Sam on one side of him, and Bill on the other, Prendergast went out into the presence of his captor.

CHAPTER VI.

As he entered the cabin Prendergast observed the colonel busily at work writing, and he was kept standing for several minutes before his judge vouchsafed him a glance. During this time he had opportunity for studying the man whose path he had attempted to cross, and he made up his mind then that to plead guilty of his real crime, that of consciously and deliberately attempting to interfere with the operation of Willoughby's plans, would be bad business. Aggressive vindictiveness was written all over Colonel Willoughby from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, and as Prendergast eyed him furtively he found little to wonder at that this was the man of whom it was said that he was a law unto himself in the city of New York. Scheming was to him what wine, women, and song were to other men, and the lines of his dissipation in commercial intrigue were as deeply marked on his face as were those induced by drink and riotous living on the faces of those given to debauchery.

One thing that Prendergast noted, too, that gave him a little ray of hope in this particular enterprise was that Willoughby's hand trembled, ever so slightly, but still perceptibly, as he wrote, and this he chose to attribute to excesses—that is to say, to the fact that he had acquired the habit of carrying burdens that were proving too heavy for his strength, and it might very well be that herein lay the motive for his present questionable behavior.

One does not go to the length of kidnaping even one's own children unless one has some pretty good reason for doing it, and one of the things that had bothered Prendergast was as to the motive that induced the act.

This he would have to prove if it ever came to a struggle in which the law should concern itself, and when he observed that the hand of this man who ruled others as with a fist of iron was not as steady as it ought to have been, he made up his mind that there was a reason for it. What the reason might be he could of course not even surmise, but the fact of its existence was amply proven, to his way of thinking, and he comforted himself with the thought that what exists can generally be found out if one puts his mind seriously at work to that end.

In any event, as he stood there awaiting the colonel's pleasure or displeasure—he cared little now which it was—he decided upon his line of defense; complete ignorance of all that had transpired since he left the park.

At last the colonel threw down his pen and looked up.

"Well, young man," he said, settling back in his chair and eying Prendergast keenly, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"Why, sir," returned Prendergast hesitatingly, "I hardly know what to say. I thought perhaps you were going to explain it, sir."

"I explain?" thundered Willoughby, leaning forward menacingly. "What the devil have I got to explain?"

"How I come to be here, sir," replied Prendergast simply. "You come along and hire a cab from me, and tell me to drive you around the park. I obey your order. Take you to the Fort Lee Ferry, and the first thing I know I wake up and find myself lying in a bunk on a boat somewhere out on the Atlantic—or maybe it's the Pacific—nobody will tell me which—"

"You know it can't be the Pacific, don't you?" asked Willoughby sharply.

"Well, I admit it doesn't seem reasonable, sir," said Prendergast. "But then it isn't reasonable for a hansom-

cab driver to close his eyes for a minute on the rumble of his cab, and find himself a hundred miles out to sea when he opens them, even if it turns out to be only the Atlantic. There ain't much choice in oceans when you have 'em landed on you that way."

Willoughby laughed in spite of himself at this remark.

"Perhaps you don't happen to remember trying to knock me out with a solar plexus cut," he observed.

"I don't remember even so much as touching you with my little finger," returned Prendergast, and truthfully enough, since he had completely missed him at the first and only onslaught.

"I thought you were drunk when you did it," said Willoughby. "Probably you don't even remember falling into the river?"

"No, sir, I do not," returned Prendergast. "Though when I waked up this morning I knew I had been in the water somewhere, because my clothes are soaked."

"I'm glad you spoke of your clothes, because it brings up another point about you that needs explanation," said Willoughby. "It is easy to see from the quality of your garments that you are not a cab-driver. Now, what are you?"

The sharp, domineering manner was cruelly intensified as Willoughby spoke, and it startled Prendergast, for he was not at all prepared with an explanation of this complication. He had come into the room expecting that his occupation when he had first crossed Willoughby's path would act as a sufficient concealment of his identity, but here was the question brought up suddenly and insistently.

"You may as well make a clean breast of it to me," Willoughby went on. "I am neither an idiot nor blind. Your clothes——"

"You shouldn't judge a man by his clothes," said Prendergast.

"I don't altogether," retorted Willoughby. "If the clothes are ruled out of evidence, look at your hands. They are not only white and soft, but they show pretty constant attendance upon

the manicuring establishments of the city. Now will you kindly tell me in what immaculate stables of the metropolis cab-drivers are required to have their nails manicured, or where under the vault of heaven you will find a jehu who would waste the price of ten schooners of beer, or five swigs of bad whisky, on his finger-nails?"

A broad grin came over Prendergast's face as Willoughby spoke.

"You see you're spotted," Willoughby concluded.

"Oh, well," Prendergast blurted out. "I don't see any reason for concealing the truth from you. I'm not a professional cab-driver. I'm a clerk in a wholesale importing-house."

"Whose?" demanded Willoughby quickly.

"Barlow, Laduc, and Hathaway, thirty-nine Worth Street," returned Prendergast glibly.

"And how pray did you come to be gallivanting around town on the top of a hansom last night?" persisted Willoughby. "Are you a young man of sporting proclivities?"

"Somewhat," said Prendergast. "Though this is the first time I've let 'em get away with me. A friend of mine and I had a bet, sir, about the day's earnings of a cabby. He insisted that the taxicabs were putting the hansom out of business, and I offered to bet him twenty-five dollars that an energetic cabman could earn his ten dollars a day any day of the week without trouble. He took me up, and having a day off yesterday I started in to prove my point personally, and you know the result. I've lost the cab, and find myself the guest of a stranger somewhere out on the Atlantic Ocean, bound for the Lord knows where, and apparently regarded with suspicion by everybody on board. Shouldn't wonder if I'd lost my job, too," he added, with a fairly successful simulation of ruefulness.

"But you won your bet," observed Willoughby, his cold eyes contracting, and fixing themselves so keenly upon Prendergast that from their own depths they flashed a warning to him.

"How's that?" he asked innocently. "You proved that your cab-driver could make his ten dollars twice over, didn't you?" demanded Willoughby.

"I don't think so," said Prendergast. "Fact is, I haven't had time to count up yet."

"The twenty dollars that my son handed you on the pier—" began Willoughby.

"Aha!" thought Prendergast. "That's the milk in the cocoanut, eh? I think I'll have to forget that."

"Why," he said aloud, "did anybody hand me twenty dollars?" He began feeling in his pockets. "I don't seem to find it," he added. "But of course that don't prove anything—I can't find my watch either."

Willoughby remained silent, quietly gazing at Prendergast for two or three minutes. The latter's story was so perfectly plausible that he could see no good reason for doubting it, and it was superficially evident that the young man's memory as to what had occurred on the pier was really a blank. Either that or the fellow was an unusually acute verbal fencer, and what object could he have in pursuing his point now that he had sobered up? The colonel had at no time doubted that it was indulgence in liquor that had inspired Prendergast to be quarrelsome, and landed him in his present plight.

"My son handed you a twenty-dollar bill," said Willoughby, after a while, "in settlement of your fare."

"Then I must owe him about fifteen dollars in change," returned Prendergast. "That is unless I gave it to him last night. Did I return the change, sir?" he asked, naively enough to throw Willoughby off his guard altogether.

"I don't know whether you did or not," lied Willoughby, speaking vehemently. "And what's more, sir, I don't care. We'll assume that you did and call that matter square. Now, one of us owes the other a good deal more than it is convenient to pay, although if I am in your debt you forced the obligation upon me. I hardly need to say that I didn't want you on this trip."

He paused a minute, and then bring-

ing his hand down heavily upon the table he proceeded fiercely.

"In fact, it's cursed inconvenient to have you. If there's anything under the floor of heaven that I hate it is a dead-head, and I'm blest if I know what I am going to do with you. But this much I will say, and you will do well to bear it in mind. You tried to interfere with my plans last night, and for that I owe you a grudge, but it is clear to me that drunken folly was responsible, and I propose to wipe the slate clean. We'll try to imagine that, as the account stands this morning, there is a balance in favor of neither of us, and my advice to you is to take mighty good care that it stays that way. What I owe I pay, whether it is in dollars or favors or—well, flies that settle on the tires of my wheels get crushed for their pains. What you are, who you are, where you come from, or where you are going, don't concern me in the least so long as you keep out of my way. Understand?"

"Yes, sir, I think I do," said Prendergast.

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yes, sir," said Prendergast. "I've seen you many times in town, sir, though I didn't recognize you in the dark last night."

"Then it is not necessary for me to tell you that I can make men, and unmake them as well, if I take it into my head to do so," said Willoughby, with a flash of arrogant pride in his eye. "I am a man with some reach, and what I want I generally get. So if way back in that noddle of yours where I can't see it you are coddling any ideas that a dry-goods clerk, or ten thousand dry-goods clerks, can make me uncomfortable, for your own good get rid of them. If I had wanted to I could have let you drown last night, and nobody the wiser for that. If I want to I can have you put overboard accidentally to-night, and nobody the wiser for that either. There are ten thousand and one ways in which I can have you disappear off the face of the earth, and still keep you alive, if I raise my little finger to give the

order, and it is just as well that you should understand the fact right now."

"I understand it," said Prendergast. "But I don't see why you should wish to give any such orders."

"Neither do I," returned Willoughby. "Take good care that I do not have cause to change my mind. You may go now. I will have the captain fix you out with quarters a little better than those in the forecastle. You appear to be somewhat of a gentleman in spite of your predilection for making fool bets and drinking more than is good for you; and until you yourself give me some reason for doing otherwise, I will try to make you comfortable."

Prendergast turned to leave when one of the state-room doors opened, and a stewardess emerged. She carried a silver tray, upon which rested an untouched breakfast. The woman paused as she came into the cabin, and as her eye fell upon Prendergast she uttered an exclamation of surprise, stumbled, and let the contents of the platter fall upon the floor.

A glance of recognition passed between her and Prendergast, but was fortunately unperceived by Willoughby, whose attention had been diverted from the individuals to the clutter of teapots and dishes upon the cabin floor, and equally from the wireless entreaty from Prendergast to the woman to hold her tongue.

"Excuse me, Colonel Willoughby," said the woman. "There's a rather heavy sea on this morning, sir."

"So it would seem," returned the colonel carelessly. "By the way, young man," he added, turning to Prendergast, "what is your name?"

The woman paused to listen as Prendergast replied.

"James Watson, sir," said he.

CHAPTER VII.

Miss Mary Willoughby was lying in the larger state-room on the starboard side of the yacht, the state-room out of whose doors the startled stewardess

had projected a trayful of breakfast dishes.

Miss Willoughby was certainly not looking her best this morning, for her eyes were red and half closed with weeping; her nose was scarce a shade less rubicund from much blowing of that ordinarily pretty bit of retrousse loveliness; her hair was disheveled and tangled with much tossing about on a restless pillow for fourteen interminable hours; and her cheek was as pallid as the pillow from worry and despair of heart. Under normal conditions her eyes were soft and pleasant to look upon. Her nose was piquant, pretty after a fashion, and her mouth was of full size.

Over all was a most appealing sense of femininity, a sweet womanly charm that one might almost call a fragrance, and out of the pathetic little picture there came a mute cry for protection, for comfort, and for—well, something that covers all the rest, and will not be denied once the cry is heard echoing in the heart that is waiting for it.

As she lay there the door opened softly and the kindly-faced stewardess returned. She asked no questions, but went cheerfully about the work of tidying up the disordered room.

"What kind of a day is it out, Jane?" Miss Willoughby asked faintly.

"It's coming off to be fine, miss," said the stewardess. "Maybe this afternoon you will feel able to get up and have your chair on deck."

"I don't think I shall," the girl replied listlessly. "I am very, very tired."

"That's one nice thing about it, ma'am," said the stewardess. "You don't have to get up if you don't want to. Though I think you would feel better if you did. The air is very soft."

"I haven't slept all night," quivered the girl, her lips tremulous with the tears she was holding back.

"And no wonder, my dear," said the stewardess sympathetically. "You must have been frightened half to death, poor thing. The men say the way that cabin went on was something fierce."

"Cabman?" queried Miss Willoughby. "Why, what do you mean, Jane? I don't remember any trouble with a cabman."

"Oh, I forgot—you had fainted—of course," said the stewardess.

"Tell me what happened," said Miss Willoughby.

"Why, when you and your father drove on the pier, and was met by Mr. Clarence and the dory, there was some trouble about the fare, nobody seems to know just what," Jane ran on. "Bill says Mr. Clarence paid the driver too much, but that don't seem likely. A cabman wouldn't get quarrelsome because they'd overpaid him, would he, miss?"

"It would hardly seem so," said Miss Willoughby, "but go on, Jane. Did he become abusive?"

"Awful, ma'am," said Jane. "Why, he even went so far as to accuse your father of trying to kidnap you—the idea of a man's kidnapping his own daughter!"

Now, whether it was the awfulness of the idea or something else that caused it, the effect of this remark upon the little picture of desolation was rather remarkable. She sat bolt upright in her berth with unexpected energy.

"He accused Colonel Willoughby of what?" she cried; her pallid cheek taking on a slight tinge of most becoming pink.

"Of kidnapping you, miss," returned Jane, looking curiously at her young mistress, for she had noticed this sudden access of energy, where a moment ago all had been listless despair. "I am afraid he must have been drunk."

"But what else did he do, and what did my father say?" demanded Miss Willoughby eagerly.

"Oh, the colonel gave him a dressing down, but it didn't seem to do any good," said Jane. "The cabman insisted that your father had no right to be taking you away and wanted to call in the police to decide whether a man had a right to take his own daughter off on a yacht."

"Go on, go on!" cried Miss Willoughby excitedly.

"Well, of course you know the colonel couldn't give in to any such unreasonable demands as that," Jane continued. "So he called him down a second time, and Bill says he piled it on so hot that the cabman got down from his seat at the back of the hansom and started in to give the colonel a thrashing. He even took off his coat to do it, and finally when he let out a blow that must have knocked your father out if it had ever hit him, he missed his aim, stumbled forward, and fell over the side of the dock into the river."

"How perfectly horrible!" moaned Miss Willoughby, sinking back on her pillow. "And the poor fellow was drowned?"

"No, indeed," laughed Jane. "You can't drown that kind. They fished him out, and when they got him into the boat they found that in falling overboard he had hit his head on the side of the dory, and it looked as though his skull was broke, so they brought him on board."

"On board this yacht?" asked Miss Willoughby, raising herself on her elbow, and gazing at the stewardess with strained attention.

"Yes, miss, on this yacht," was the reply. "He's on board of her now, walkin' around just as chipper as you please. His head's done up in a bandage yet, but whether it aches from what he had at dinner or what he got after dinner when his head hit the dory, I ain't had the heart to ask him."

Miss Willoughby settled back in her berth again, and for some reason or other she seemed to be less desolate than she was. The trace of pink that had appeared in her cheeks when Jane the stewardess had first begun her story of the extraordinary incidents of the night before, remained there, and as she snuggled down into the soft depths of her pillow she sighed, a sibilant little whisper from a heart into which hope had entered. In short, Mary Willoughby acted just as you would expect a sorely tried person who felt utterly alone in the world to act when

the presence of some one near at hand bringing messages of courage and hope of release from trouble was revealed.

"What was the poor chap's name, Jane?" she asked.

"He says it's James Watson," said Jane. "But I wouldn't swear to it just because he says it. These cabbies ain't the most reliable folks in the world."

"James Watson," murmured the girl, and then with another little sigh she turned over and went to sleep.

The stewardess watched her thoughtfully for a few moments.

"James Watson—Mr. Prendergast!" she whispered to herself. "I wonder what it all means."

CHAPTER VIII.

Some hours later, after she had had a good refreshing sleep and eaten a sustaining bit of luncheon, Mary Willoughby appeared on deck. It was a relief to Prendergast to see her come out of her cabin door, for time had hung very heavy on his hands. In his own proper person he was a fairly accomplished yachtsman, and to have to sit around for hour after hour ignored by everybody, and feeling himself taboo in every grade of society on board was not at all pleasant.

Bill and Sam were jealous because they could not see why a plain everyday cabman should have special quarters set apart for him aft, in a small but private state-room of his own; and harder yet to bear had he found the arrogant demeanor of Willoughby's son, Clarence, who had taken it upon himself to be aggressively disagreeable, and to order him out of a comfortable steamer-chair in which he had ventured to doze off.

"It is quite evident that you haven't lost your nerve," remarked Clarence, with pompous insolence, as he spied Prendergast taking his ease. "You ought to get yourself incorporated as the United States Cheek Trust, and sell gall to people that need it in their business."

"I didn't mean to intrude," said Prendergast, rising.

"Important if true," retorted Clarence, taking the vacated chair.

"I hardly know where to go," Prendergast added, ignoring the sneer.

"Well, if I had my way they'd fix you out with a rocking-chair on the keel," said the gracious Clarence. "But the governor has his weak moments like the rest of us, and what I think don't count. All I have to say is that I don't want to see you sitting around here. So run along, cabby! Skiddoo!"

Prendergast, having nothing else to do and apparently nowhere else to go, retired to his state-room, which for the time being he could at least call his own. It was a little cubby-hole, probably designed originally for the use of a valet, situated aft of the engines, and under the gangway leading down to the main cabin, with just enough of its roof projecting above the level of the deck overhead to permit of two bull's-eye port-holes which let in what light and air there were to be had within. These looked out upon the awning-covered open space on the deck, where Clarence was sitting trying to recover his good humor through the means of an endless series of cigarettes.

The ports were closed when Prendergast entered the room, and he was about to open them when he heard his name softly whispered from behind him. Startled, he turned quickly, and was relieved to see that the speaker was Jane the stewardess.

"Mr. Prendergast!" she whispered.

"Hush, Jane. Not that name—Watson—James Watson," returned Prendergast warily. "Don't forget that. It's important."

"Yes, sir, I won't," said Jane, enigmatically enough, but meaning well.

"I am glad you have come," said Prendergast. "I have wanted to speak to you ever since I saw you in the cabin this morning. How long have you been on this yacht?"

"Three weeks, sir," replied Jane. "I came with it when Colonel Willoughby chartered it, sir."

"I see. What yacht is it?"

"The *Roraima*, sir. She belongs to

a gentleman in Caracas—Signor Del Vallo."

"I thought it was strange I did not recognize her," said Prendergast. "But tell me, have you any special feeling of loyalty to Colonel Willoughby?"

"No, sir," Jane answered. "I only goes with the boat, sir. I takes my orders like one of the crew."

"So that if you thought he was up to some villainy that would hurt me—"

"I shall never forget what you did for me, Mr. Prend—I mean, Mr. Watson—never," said the maid. "When I think of what might have happened to me that night in Newport Harbor if you hadn't knocked that drunken brute overboard—"

"Never mind that, Jane," said Prendergast. "Anybody else would have done the same under the circumstances."

"But it was you as done it, and I sha'n't forget," said Jane.

"Well, then," Prendergast resumed, "what I want to say is that I am in trouble, and your young charge in there—"

"You mean Miss Willoughby, sir?"

"Yes—Miss Willoughby. I think she is in trouble, too, and if she is I want to get her out of it. I may need your assistance."

"You can count on me, Mr. Watson," said the stewardess, "and I'll bring the towels right away," she added.

The irrelevance of this remark was a grateful assurance to Prendergast that Jane would not only help him, but was capable of rather quick thought when occasion demanded, for as she was speaking Colonel Willoughby appeared in the doorway.

"Well," said the colonel, "the captain has stowed you away in here, has he?"

"Yes," said Prendergast. "I thought I'd come down and try to make myself fit to look at. I can keep out of your way, but I can't help being seen once in a while, and the last bath I had wasn't all that a bath ought to be for a fellow that likes clean water."

"Maybe my son will lend you a coat," suggested Willoughby.

"No, thanks," said Prendergast quickly. "I've already borrowed a jumper from the captain."

"By thunder!" he muttered under his breath as Willoughby went out. "That was a narrow escape all right! And what a trump Jane is, to be sure!"

The afternoon proved to be, as the captain had predicted, exceptionally fine, and Prendergast standing on the deck up forward, in the lee of the pilot-house, needed no charts to tell him that the *Roraima* was bound for Southern waters. The extraordinary clarity of the air, as well as the rising thermometer, told him that, and he began to speculate idly upon the exact location of the yacht when *she* appeared.

What he saw was a slender, somewhat tall, pale-faced young woman, not a girl exactly, nor yet a woman matured; one either just verging on twenty, or not far past it, and as graceful in her action as she walked along the deck as the strenuous twenty hours she had just passed through would permit. All that he saw made him glad; glad of the thought that he was there to see; glad that if she needed assistance of any kind he was there to offer it; glad even if he was only an every-day sort of fool for thinking that she needed assistance, and gladdest of all when once or twice he saw her looking with interest in his direction.

But his elation soon gave way to irksomeness. As an object of suspicion on board, he could not hope to come any closer to this new-born heroine of his romance, and as the hours passed he became irritated with his isolation, and finally returned once more to his little refuge beneath the deck. There he opened the two little port-windows, and as he did so he noticed that Miss Willoughby's chair backed against the roof projection of his room, and that one of its hind legs was placed almost directly over one of the port-holes.

Had they been acquainted he could with ease have reached his arm up through the little window and shaken hands with the lady, but of course at this stage of the proceedings that was impossible, so he threw himself down

upon his bunk, and went to sleep, taking strange comfort, however, from the idea that she was so close at hand.

How long Prendergast slept he does not know, but when he awoke it was dark, and he could hear two voices at work directly over his head. One of these he recognized at once as that of Colonel Willoughby, and he was speaking excitedly.

"When I tell you that there is a fortune in it, why can you not see it as I do?" he was saying in a voice that was half-whine, half-snarl. "You don't suppose for a minute that I am asking this as a favor, do you? It is for your own benefit, not mine—that is, you will benefit proportionately to your share of the underwriting. Of course I am going into the thing myself."

"The money is not mine," said the other, and Prendergast was stirred to note that it was her voice that spoke. "I cannot use what does not belong to me."

"You will excuse my profanity, Mary, but that shop-worn old contention of yours makes me so damned mad that I can't help myself. Your grandfather left the money to you, did he not?"

"In a way, yes," said the girl. "He left it to me in trust, but that did not mean that he wanted to cut my mother out of the use of it forever. He had no quarrel with her, and you know it."

"I know that he appointed my cousin George Willoughby and me trustees under his will to take care of the estate until you were twenty-one years of age, and that he did that for the protection of his fortune. Now, if he had wanted your mother to have that money why didn't he leave it to her?"

"I don't know," was Miss Willoughby's reply. "If he thought he had a good reason he did her an injustice, and as I told you last night, I shall do all I can to rectify it. I cannot believe that if my grandfather could have foreseen what was going to happen, he would ever have done it. At least he'd never have made you a trustee. The idea of my mother having to go to you, of all men in this world, for money

on which to live! The fact that you can't see the awfulness of that shows how much delicacy you have—and then this last outrage, inducing me to meet you to talk about the affairs of the estate, and deliberately and cruelly abducting me the way you have—I wonder you even dare to speak to me, much less ask my confidence."

"You don't seem to realize what I dare do," retorted Willoughby angrily. "And you want to be careful not to push me too far!"

"I assure you that I have no greater desire now than to be rid of all connection with you," the girl answered. "I don't wish to push or to hinder you—merely to get away from you. If you will so arrange matters that from this moment on to the end of time we have nothing further to do with each other no one will be gladder than I. It is a humiliation to me even to bear your name."

"Better change it then," sneered the man coarsely. "I guess you will find plenty of men ready to help John Sharpless' granddaughter out of a predicament of that sort."

"For the same reason that you married my poor mother?"

"What the devil do you mean by that?" demanded Willoughby angrily.

"To get final control of John Sharpless' money," retorted the girl. "A little plan that his granddaughter will upset the moment she comes of age, thank Heaven!"

"You are hopeless," said Willoughby, rising. "But let me tell you this, young lady; you don't know me yet, but it won't be long before you do. I am definitely in one of the biggest underwritings this country has ever seen, and I make no bones about saying to you that I want your securities, or rather the securities that will be yours on the tenth of June to enable me to make good, and I am going to have them, understand? I am going to have them. Of course if you come to my office on the tenth of June and demand them I've got to give them up. But you won't come to my office on that day. No, nor upon any other day after

that until I get good and ready to have you there. I won't ask you again. You can take this chance or leave it. If you say yes, this yacht whirls about, and back we sail into New York harbor, and you can go back to your mother. If you say no—well, there is the Atlantic Ocean. The land isn't more than a hundred miles in. Go! I'm not hindering you."

Prendergast, breathlessly angry at the bullying note in the brute's voice, clenched his fist until the finger-nails dug deep into the palms of his hands, and tremblingly awaited the answer.

"My answer is no," said the girl.

Willoughby rose up with an oath, and a moment later Prendergast heard him descending the stairs and stamping toward his room, slamming the door thereof violently behind him. The situation was materially cleared by what he had heard. The fact of the kidnaping was clearly established, and the motive was not far to seek—money, everlasting money. He was glad again that he had been chosen by chance to carry aid to the victim of this man's brutish lust for fortune, and although he could see no present way out of their troubles, he doubted not that there was a way and that he should find it. He had until the tenth of June, anyway, and that was as yet nearly a month off.

And then a soft but stirring sound fell upon his ears. It was a sob, followed by another, and another, and then evidences of a flood of tears.

"Miss Willoughby," he called in a loud whisper up through the port.

The sobbing ceased for a moment, and there was absolute silence, broken only by the splashing of the sea on the sides of the yacht.

"Miss Willoughby," he repeated.

"Yes," came a tear-suffused voice from above. "Who is calling me?"

"Only a friend," returned Prendergast. "A stranger, but one who will see that you come to no harm, and who will do all that he can to help you. I know what has happened, and you can rely on me."

"Oh, can you do anything?" asked the girl pleadingly.

"I can move mountains," laughed Prendergast. "Will you take my hand on it?"

He playfully reached his arm up through the port-hole, and the girl took his hand in hers for an instant, and the pact was sealed.

"Are you James Watson?" she asked.

"Yes," Prendergast answered, much against his will—he greatly preferred Prendergast to Watson at this moment. "Have you heard of him?"

"From Jane, yes," said she.

"Then you know what happened last night?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Prendergast, "I meant every bit of it, and what I did was not because I had been dining, but because way down in the bottom of my heart something told me that you were in danger. And that is how I happen to be here."

"I thank you," said the girl simply. "And I believe you will help me, and I—I shall have faith in you, James Watson. Good night."

"Good night," said Prendergast, gulping down his emotions, which were growing rather full.

It was very difficult for a man in his position to be satisfied with an interview under such conditions—like talking to a girl through a stove-pipe, or as Pyramus and Thisbe used to do, through a crack in a wall. Not that he would have cared ordinarily, but that as he talked he became suddenly conscious of an overwhelming desire to see what kind of eyes had the girl whose hands were so warm and soft.

CHAPTER IX.

Now, it is not our intention to set forth here the log of the *Roraima*, and inasmuch as the next day was a nasty one on the sea, we will pass it over. There is but one point that should be mentioned in connection with it, and that is that it marked the beginning of a pretty strenuous application to the

little black bottle on the part of Colonel Willoughby, and brought as well to Prendergast's attention the fact that that marvelous schemer was laboring under a more considerable stress of mind than he had imagined. The colonel was keeping up on stimulant, and it was doubtful if he was confining himself to that in which alcohol was involved, for when early the following morning Prendergast looked out through those important little windows of his cubby-hole to see what kind of a prospect there was for fair weather, one of the first objects to greet his eye lying on the deck under the chair in which Willoughby had sat the night before was a small hypodermic needle.

Here was the reason for that trembling hand. Evidently that redoubtable and reputedly successful speculator, and Wall Street plunger, John Willoughby, was in deeper waters financially than those he was now traveling upon physically. The necessity for his demand on his daughter was growing momentarily more obvious, although as Prendergast thought the situation over he did not necessarily believe that the reason advanced—the participation in a vast underwriting scheme which should make the fortune of everybody concerned—was the true one. Anyhow, Prendergast was now convinced that his captor was in desperate straits, and the knowledge of the fact strengthened his own courage.

The third day out the skies were blue and the seas were placid, and Prendergast rose up early and sought the deck for a constitutional; but he found little opportunity for this, for the moment he emerged from the gangway, Willoughby himself, who was there before him, clutched madly at his arm, very much as a drowning man would catch at a straw. His face was white and haggard, his eyes blood-shot, and from top to toe he trembled like a leaf.

"Watson," he gurgled hoarsely, "stick by me—for God's sake stick by me. Don't let me go near that damned rail. It's too easy—it's too easy."

"As you wish, colonel," said Prendergast, with something like pity in

his eye, though when he remembered the man's brutality the night before last he found very little of it in his heart. "Little bilious this morning?" he added.

"No," said Willoughby, with a shudder, "it isn't that. It is a strange thing, Watson, but vast bodies of water have always had an irresistible attraction for me. Somehow, as I have looked out upon those waves this morning I have felt an overwhelming impulse to jump into them, and end this awful struggle that we call life. If you hadn't come just when you did I am morally convinced that I should by this time——"

Willoughby covered his eyes with his hands and groaned.

"I'm glad I came," said Prendergast, simply. "What you need, colonel, is a good long rest. What's the use of keeping up this everlasting fight for fortune, or power, or whatever it is you really want, and wearing yourself out so in the getting of it that when it does come you are worse than a dead man?"

"Rest?" retorted Willoughby. "It is so long since I have even heard that word that I don't know what it means. For thirty years, in season and out, Watson, I have had my nose to the grindstone. Even in my sleep I've been working, working, working, until I've got so that I couldn't stop if I wanted to."

"And how about your nerves?" asked Prendergast.

"Men of my stamp have nerve, not nerves," returned Willoughby. "When we lose one——"

"And get the other," suggested Prendergast.

"We go to smash," Willoughby put in fiercely. "But," he added, "I haven't lost mine yet, and by God, I'll show these snarling puppies who are trying to put me out that there's a lot of bite left in the old dog yet!"

"Well, anyhow," said Prendergast, "I'd pretend to rest now. Go back to your state-room and take it easy for a day or two. You can't do anything until——"

"That's true enough," said Willoughby gloomily. "I'll have my breakfast and see what twenty-four hours in bed will do for me."

"Perhaps a steamer-chair—" Prendergast began.

"Not with that everlasting call of the water ringing in my ears," shuddered Willoughby. "No, Watson, not that. It's too easy, and you'll find, my boy, when you come to know me better that I don't take the easy way if I can help it. The big things grow along the hard way, Watson, and all I've ever got that was worth having has come from fight, fight, fight, and hammer, hammer, hammer. I won't end the thing up along the easy way, not for all the rats of Wall Street. I'm better off in my state-room under lock and key."

The last words he muttered more to himself than to Prendergast, as he turned and tottered down the gangway to his room.

"The colonel is in a bad way," thought Prendergast. "Maybe this thing will solve itself before many hours."

The condition of the gracious Clarence was scarcely more promising than that of his father, although in the son's case there was none of the more serious complications at work that beset his worried father. His troubles were due to nothing more or less than the habit not of drinking but of absorbing rum. To be sure he varied its form so as to relieve the monotony of a listless day upon the ocean, taking it in the shape of cocktails before breakfast, Remsen coolers and Tom Collinses in the forenoon, high-balls in the afternoon, with a series of nightcaps beginning with a brandy and soda at seven o'clock in the evening when he first began to contemplate going to bed, after copious libations of champagne at dinner, and ending with—but let us not anticipate. What Clarence ended the day with will be set forth in due time.

Suffice it to say that the serenity of his temper, which was ruffled enough when he awoke at ten in the morning, was not at all enhanced by the Bacchanalian exercises in which he indulged

as the day wore on, and Prendergast, as a mere matter of politics, strove to keep out of his way.

Once or twice, however, in spite of all he could do to efface himself they met, and until Clarence got his eyes in focus, and perceived to whom he was talking, he at least made an effort to be fraternally genial, but once those roving optics unraveled themselves from their knotty tangle, and it was borne in upon what little consciousness was still left to him to whom he had addressed his familiar remarks he became loquaciously resentful of Prendergast's continued presence on board.

"If you will only confine yourself to one place on this boat," he had said thickly, "so that I won't have to see one of you wherever I look, I shall be very much obliged to you. Just go sit off on the horizon for a little while—either one, I don't give a hoot which, and then I'll look at the other one."

There were several more pleasantries of this nature as the day passed, and finally Prendergast, after vainly attempting to avoid crossing the young man's path, fearing that sooner or later he might find it necessary actively to resent the overbearing youngster's insults, withdrew to his own cubby-hole and passed a dreary afternoon playing bridge with himself.

It was near twilight when he was aroused from the absorption of his game by a slight tapping on the door. Opening it he found himself face to face with Jane, the stewardess.

"I have a message for you," she whispered. "Miss Willoughby wanted you to know that we are headed for Havana. I overheard the captain saying so this morning, sir, and when I told Miss Mary she said that you ought to know."

"Good!" said Prendergast. "If that is the case we ought to make port by to-morrow morning."

"That is what is expected, Mr. Watson," returned the stewardess. "And Miss Willoughby is very anxious to know what you think can be done, sir."

"I don't suppose that she and I could

meet by any possibility to-night, and talk it over, could we, Jane?" Prendergast replied. "You couldn't arrange that, could you?"

"I don't see why not, sir," said Jane. "Colonel Willoughby is out of the way, and the way Mr. Clarence is going on I don't see why he shouldn't be pretty sleepy by bedtime."

"That is the most dangerous time with fellows of that kind, Jane," said Prendergast, with a laugh at the maid's naive manner of expressing herself. "Just when you think they are going to bed they wake up harder to manage than ever. However, I'll risk it. The chances are that Clarence will be dead to the world by ten o'clock. Now, why can't you dress Miss Willoughby up in your clothes and let her come out on deck and meet me right overhead? It will be safe enough. There's nobody on the lookout for you, and even if Clarence does take it into his head to wake up, he won't know that it is his sister that I am talking to."

Jane's eyes sparkled with delight at the suggestion. Would she do it? Indeed she would, even with Mr. Clarence swaggerin' around the deck like a brain-storm!

"Fine!" said Prendergast, more than pleased at the maid's enthusiastic acquiescence in his plan. "Now run to Miss Willoughby, and tell her what we have decided to do, and if she approves she will find me on deck at ten o'clock waiting for her. You haven't told her who I really am, have you?"

"No, sir," returned Jane. "But I most nearly did. When she said you didn't seem to have the manners of a cabman, sir, it was as much as I could do to keep from tellin' her the truth. I think she'd have been glad."

"Well, remember, Jane, not a word of the truth until the time comes."

"You can count on me, Mr. Pren-Watson, sir," replied the stewardess, as with an air of importance she departed—for was she not at last become an important factor in a real romance? Dear me, what a privilege, and how she did hope something would come of it!

CHAPTER X.

As was expected, the wick in the Clarentian lamp began to burn low and sputter about nine o'clock that evening, not from any lack of alcohol in the receiver however; more likely because the wick needed trimming; and if the snores from the depths of his state-room whither he had gone for the replenishment of his stock of cigarettes, and had decided before returning to the deck to take a nap on the floor, meant anything, he was out of the way for some little time. The heavy breathing of the colonel from his room on the other side of the yacht, plainly audible through the filagreed fretwork up near the cornice-line, showed that he, too, was not actively on the lookout for trouble. Prendergast went quietly up to the deck, and taking a place in the shadow of one of the life-boats, awaited the coming of Miss Willoughby.

It was a beautiful night. A fairish breeze was blowing, and as he stood there looking over the waters bathed in a flood of golden moonlight, he felt himself drifting into a most romantic mood, and his mind reverted more than once to that warm little hand which for an infinitesimal part of a second he had held in his own only two nights ago, and it was with no little impatience that he awaited a possible repetition of that delicious experience.

She came at last, somewhat timidly, as dainty a little housemaid in appearance as ever won the heart of a butler. Her little black dress and white apron and the white cap set atop of her hair were very fetching in the moonlight, and there is no telling what would have been the result if Prendergast had really been a cabman, and she the little stewardess in very truth.

He sprang forward as she appeared in the deck opening, and drew the steamer-chair into position for her to sit, and himself stood for a moment as she settled herself within it.

"You had better sit down, too," she said softly.

"Yes," he assented. "I think I had. And if you don't mind I will draw my

chair a little closer. One can never tell where there are unseen ears."

"Certainly, Mr. Watson," she replied. "This is no time for formalities. What do you think we can do?"

"Before we go on, Miss Willoughby," said Prendergast, "let me set myself right in one small particular. I am not a cabman. My being on the box that night was the result of an accident, and a foolish prank. I had gone to Claremont for my dinner, and while waiting for me my cabby was knocked down and seriously injured by an automobile. When they took him off to the hospital, just for a lark I started to drive the cab back to the stable. What happened after that you know as well as I do."

"What made you think I needed help?" she asked.

"I was an unwilling listener to what your father——"

The girl shivered. "Don't call him that, please, Mr. Watson," she said.

"You don't mean to tell me that he isn't——" began Prendergast, starting up.

"He is my stepfather," said Miss Willoughby. "My father and he were cousins. After my father's death he became the sole trustee of my grandfather's estate. He was a widower himself with one son——"

"Clarence?"

"Yes. Of course in looking after our affairs he and my mother were thrown together a great deal, and three years after my father died they married. I was four years old at the time."

"I am glad," said Prendergast. "Very glad. I could not understand how such a man could be the father of such a——"

"And then they were divorced," the girl continued. "Colonel Willoughby, as time went on and his position as trustee of a large estate brought him into contact with men of affairs, expanded, as he likes to put it. We became more of a nuisance to him than a source of happiness, and he began to look for what he considered happiness elsewhere than in his own home. Finally when it became impossible for

my mother to stand her humiliation any longer, they separated and the divorce followed."

"I understand," said Prendergast.

"And then he married the woman, and ever since then we have had the further humiliation of looking to him for our means of living—not a penny of his, however, has ever been accepted by either my mother or myself. My grandfather, for some reason known only to himself, left only the income of the estate to my mother, the principal being left in trust until I was twenty-one years of age, when the whole estate was to be turned over to me. That will be on the tenth of next June, and now Colonel Willoughby wants me to——"

"I know," said Prendergast. "I overheard. But how did you happen to get into his clutches?"

"We have been living in Indiana," Miss Willoughby explained. "Three weeks ago Colonel Willoughby wrote me that I should be needed here to execute certain papers having to do with the transfer of the estate to my hands. My mother and I were coming on together, but at the last moment she was taken ill and I had to come alone, expecting to go to the home of a Mrs. Bartlett, an old friend of my mother's living on Amsterdam Avenue. Colonel Willoughby met me at the station upon my arrival, but instead of taking me to Mrs. Bartlett's house at once, he took me to a hotel, where we had dinner; and then on the pretext of wanting to talk over important matters concerning the estate, he induced me to defer going to Mrs. Bartlett's until later in the evening. He said he had telephoned her that I would dine with him, and would appear at her house later. I don't believe now that he did anything of the sort, except probably to tell her not to expect me at all, for I have reason to believe that it was all along his intention to bring me here to this yacht."

"What makes you think that?" asked Prendergast.

"Because my trunk and all my belongings are now on board," explained

Miss Willoughby. "You see how carefully he has laid his plans. No one anywhere has any idea that I have disappeared. My mother thinks I am safely at Mrs. Bartlett's, and Mrs. Bartlett doubtless thinks that my visit is merely postponed."

"The consummate villain!" ejaculated Prendergast.

"It is the one comforting feature of the whole dreadful situation," said Miss Willoughby. "When I think of what my mother's feelings would be if she knew the truth, I am almost inclined to thank Colonel Willoughby for the one bit of decent consideration he has shown her in fifteen years."

"I am afraid you praise him beyond his deserts," said Prendergast. "It's part of his devilish ingenuity."

"I have no illusions on that score," said Miss Willoughby. "But if this thing had to be I am glad that for a little while my mother will not know. But," she added pleadingly, "is there any way out, Mr. Watson? If you have any plan I beg that you will tell me what it is."

"None, absolutely none, as yet," said Prendergast. "But it is something to know that we are going to Havana. I have friends there, and I am sure they will help us. Are you a believer in Fate?"

"What do you mean by Fate?" asked the girl.

"That some of us are sometimes ordered by a higher power than we know anything about to leave all our everyday affairs behind us and go out into the world to accomplish certain other things that have been waiting for us to come and do them since the world began," said Prendergast.

"I don't know that I have ever thought of it before," replied Miss Willoughby. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, it occurred to me that it was a great waste of energy on the part of an all-wise Providence to yank me out of a club window, send me to dine at Claremont out of season, smash my driver with a chance automobile, inspire me with an insanely idiotic desire to drive a hansom cab, and land me

here on the deck of this yacht a thousand miles from Fifth Avenue, unless it was intended that I should be of some service to somebody," said Prendergast. "That is what I think about the situation, and accordingly I am going to ask you to let things go on just as they are going. Let Willoughby do with you as he pleases——"

"You mean, agree to his demands?" asked the girl quickly.

"Never in this world!" returned Prendergast impetuously. "You are a brave little woman, Miss Willoughby, and you never showed it more than when you refused to give in to that man's wicked schemes the other night, in the face of his brutal threats. I honored you for that, and I vowed then and there that, sink or swim, I'd sink with you or swim with you. Let things drift, and have confidence in me."

"Always, Mr. Watson," said the girl softly. "I will acquiesce in all that they do, and will leave everything in your hands."

"They are both yours, from the bottom of my heart!" ejaculated Prendergast fervidly. "To-morrow we shall be at Havana. I will cable your mother at once that all is well and that she need not worry, and then if there is any justice in the world I'll have you free."

Miss Willoughby reached out that soft little hand again, and Prendergast grasped it; but an unexpected diversion at this moment caused him to drop it quickly.

A dark figure lurched along the deck and loomed above them. In the unmistakable dialect of the gracious Clarence, a voice broke in upon the silence.

"Well, I'll be jiggered," it oozed out. "If here isn't my old friend the cabby again, and spooning! Yes, by cracky, spooning with Jennie. Say, driver, what in blazes do you think you are, anyhow? Ain't there anything on this boat you can keep your hands off?"

"Not much," retorted Prendergast, springing to his feet, and clenching his fists angrily.

"Well," retorted Clarence, "we'll see about that. If there's any spooning to

be done on this craft, I guess I know who's going to do it, eh, Jennie?"

Here he lurched forward and attempted to seize the supposititious Jennie in his arms. Miss Willoughby, who had also risen and now stood transfixed with terror, uttered a cry of fear as she shrank from him.

"Let that lady alone!" cried Prendergast peremptorily. "Do you hear?"

"Lady!" roared Clarence, with a drunken laugh. "Lady! I like that. Look at the cabman's lady, will you?"

He made another lunge at the girl, who turned in flight, but he was quick enough to seize her by the apron, and detained her until Prendergast let out with his right fist, caught the unsteady Clarence on the point of his jaw, and stretched him unconscious on the deck. Miss Willoughby, released, ran to the hatchway and passed down the stairs to her room, the door to which she pantingly closed and locked behind her, trembling with nervous fear, missing Colonel Willoughby himself by not more than three precious seconds, who hearing what sounded like a disturbance on deck had come up to see what it was all about.

"What's the row up here?" he demanded, as he found Prendergast kneeling over the prostrate form of Clarence.

"Your son seems to have fallen and hurt himself," said Prendergast.

"Little fool!" growled Willoughby sympathetically. "I guess he's been drinking again."

CHAPTER XI.

It happened fortunately for all next day that Clarence came to with a very slight knowledge of what had occurred the day before, and with no knowledge at all of the events of the evening. His thrashing acting upon his subconscious mind, however, had chastened his spirit, and so it was that when the *Roraima* first sighted the looming battlements of Morro Castle and later, entering the narrow bottle-neck of Havana Harbor, came to anchor under the grim walls of the Fortress of Cabañas, no harm

had come from what had promised to be a very disagreeable complication. Intimation of this condition of affairs had been conveyed to Miss Willoughby by the ever-faithful Jane, and probably for the first time in their history those frowning heights looked down upon the spirit of Hope.

"Well, Watson," said the colonel, as the *Roraima* came to rest. "How about you?"

"I don't wish to bother you any longer than is necessary, colonel," Prendergast answered. "I guess it's up to me to fade away."

"And there are no hard feelings because I carried you off?"

"On the contrary—I am obliged to you for a charming trip," said Prendergast.

"I'm glad, sir," said the colonel heartily. "And by the way, you of course know that I am mixed up in a large number of enterprises, certain complications in which require that I shall travel incog, like your Simonpure royalties."

"I understand the situation perfectly," said Prendergast. "I know when to keep my mouth shut, sir."

"Here's a hundred dollars," Willoughby went on. "It should be enough to get you back to New York comfortably."

As a matter of policy and not for use, Prendergast took the proffered bill. The matter of financing himself in Havana, where he had friends, was the least of his anxieties, and while it was repugnant to him to accept Willoughby's aid, just as he had revolted at the idea of wearing Clarence's coat, here was a case where expediency overruled inclination. He thanked the colonel, and pocketed the bill, which in its identical form he later returned.

Shortly after, the whole party were landed, and after seeing the others off to the Pasque Hotel, Prendergast himself proceeded to the Inglaterra. His best friend would hardly have recognized him as he strode along the way—on his back a faded blue jumper borrowed from the captain; on his head a

white flannel yachting-cap of ancient vintage, and not any too white either; and his chin, cheek, and upper lip bristling with a four days' growth of beard. Realizing the generally disreputable character of his appearance, it imparted an unusual glow of satisfaction to his heart when he thought of the final glance he had received on the quay from Mary Willoughby, expressive as it was of gratitude, confidence, and—well, to put it mildly, respectful admiration.

He deemed it advisable before registering at the hotel to interview the barber, and so he made directly for that important branch of the hotel business.

"I want everything you have from a hair-cut and a shave down to a shine," he said to the barber, who being a retired volunteer of the Spanish-American War, remaining in Cuba for his health at the end of his term of enlistment, promptly understood what his customer meant without further explanation.

When the hair had been cut and his one-time face had emerged from the bush under the keen sweep of the razor Prendergast sat up and began to renew his acquaintance with himself in the mirror, when he suddenly became conscious of a pair of sharp black eyes boring through him from the chair alongside, and then a roar of recognition, mixed in with the lather of a careless tonsor, fell upon his ears.

"Well, by all that's beautiful if it isn't our long-lost Willie!" was what the roar committed itself to. "Where under the canopy have you been?"

Prendergast looked around.

"Why, Tommy Donnelly!" he cried, overjoyed at what he saw. "What are you doing here?"

"Special Correspondent, New York *Whirald*, on the lookout for revolutions, insurrections, émeutes, and missing New Yorkers," said Tommy. "But I say, Billy, where the devil have you been? All New York's turned upside-down over you, and at this very minute seventeen newspapers, fourteen syndicates, and about eight million detective agencies are dragging the Atlantic

Ocean trying to find even so little as your collar-button."

"Why, what's the matter with me?" asked Prendergast.

"You ought to read the papers," retorted Donnelly. "Didn't you know that you have suddenly disappeared, and that nobody knows what's become of you? When last seen—"

"Never mind that now, Tommy," said Prendergast hastily. "Wait till I get out of this and I'll tell you all about it."

"You bet you will," said Donnelly, "and to-morrow morning the New York *Whirald* will have a nice fat juicy early spring beet on its E. C.s that will give the rest of the bunch the biggest pain they've had in steen years."

Made somewhat more presentable by the genius of the retired volunteer, Prendergast, accompanied by Donnelly, inscribed the flourishing autograph of James Watson upon the hotel register, and was assigned to a comfortable room adjoining Donnelly's own, where for the next two or three hours he busied himself unfolding to his amazed and delighted friend the story of the past four days, omitting only such portions of it as had to do with his innermost perceptions as to the personal attractiveness of Miss Mary Willoughby. When he had finished he leaned back in his chair and gazed earnestly into Donnelly's face.

"Well, Tommy," he said. "What do you think?"

"It's a peach—corking!" was the enthusiastic response. "I can just see the front page of the *Whirald* to-morrow morning, when my little tick-tack has begun to echo up and down the Great White Way."

Prendergast's face clouded.

"Mighty sorry, Tommy," he said gravely, "but I shall have to ask you not to send in a line of it."

"What's that?" roared Donnelly.

"You mustn't find me just yet, old man," said Prendergast. "It won't do. You can help me out with a little cash, and stand sponsor for me at the bank,

and direct me to a quick-tailoring joint, but no publicity, my boy—not yet, anyhow."

"But, my dear boy," protested Donnelly, almost tearfully, "how can I not? It's the biggest scoop I've ever made, Bill, and coming just now—"

"Why just now instead of a week from now?" asked Prendergast.

"Why, they are hammering hell out of old Willoughby up in the metropolis, and every kind of a little item about him will go like wildfire," pleaded Donnelly. "If the *Gazoo* could prove that he stubbed his toe getting out of bed it would issue a sporting extra with head-lines a mile high, and pictures of the bed, to tell about it. The thing began to slide day before yesterday. There's a general feeling that Willoughby has gone short on International Beans, or some other industrial—I can't keep 'em all straight in my mind—and the whole street is after him with a hot stick. Since the Exchange opened yesterday they've hoisted the stuff up so high that you can't buy a bean in the open market under a thousand dollars, and Boston is going to build a radium boulevard all the way from Tom Lawson's office out to Revere Beach on the profits."

"Aha," said Prendergast, "that's what he was figuring on."

"The ruction came like a bolt out of a clear sky," Donnelly continued. "I don't believe he knows what's struck him yet, but when he finds out I'll bet you he hits the pike for little old New York like a streak of greased lightning. So you see I just can't hold up that story, Bill."

"Yes, you can, and what's more you've got to, old man," said Prendergast firmly. "Too much depends on keeping this whole business dark until I can get Miss Willoughby out of his clutches. It is easy enough to see that he is in desperate straits, and I'm blest if I know what he wouldn't do to that girl if under the circumstances she persisted in thwarting him, and the worst comes to the worst."

"Well, by Jingo, Billie Prendergast, if anybody else but you were to ask

me——" gulped Donnelly, trying hard, however, to conceal his disappointment.

"Go in for your other specialties, old chap," said Prendergast.

"But there isn't anything doing in my line," said Donnelly ruefully. "I haven't spotted anything that looks like even the Daughter of a Revolution for six weeks now, and the office is getting sore. They think I'm not on the job, and the first thing I know I'll have my resignation cabled to me if I don't get busy. Why, Bill, I had to start the last insurrection myself. Yes, sir! Actually had to go out in the dead of the night, and foment discord among these happy islanders, pull the revolution out of bed, as it were, and set it revolving in spite of its protests that it was sleepy, and was afraid of the police, in order to hold my job."

"Oh, well," laughed Prendergast, "if you were able to do that once you can do it again, and I'll be glad to help you. I really pine for a little active exercise, and I don't much care whether I get it playing squash or leading a fake insurrection. Anyhow, hold your horses, Tommy. Keep mum about me. I promise you now that when I am ready to be found I'll give you the job."

"Twixt love and duty, Bill," said Donnelly, "I've always been on the side of duty. But when friendship calls, duty be hanged. Your story, William Prendergast, is herewith returned with the editor's regrets that he cannot use the enclosed. How do you feel on the subject of a boiled egg and a bottle of Rascal?"

"I could eat if I were asked," said Prendergast.

An hour later Donnelly took Prendergast for a walk to the end of the Prado, and they sat there in the dying light of the day looking out over the waters of the gulf. Off to the right was the entrance to the harbor, which a few hours before Prendergast had passed through, and over all was an air of almost theatrical unreality. Suddenly the dramatic qualities of the atmosphere were intensified, for as they looked toward the mouth of the harbor

they noted the graceful lines of a trim craft passing swiftly along, her nose pointed seaward.

"Beauty, isn't she?" said Donnelly, but Prendergast was speechless. The departing vessel was the *Roraima*!

"For God's sake, Tommy, it's Willoughby's yacht! He's fooled me," he gasped.

"Looks that way," said Tommy, "but we'd better try at the Pasque before calling out the fire-department. I knew the old man would light out as soon as he heard from the front, but that don't mean that he is taking the family with him. If we find that he is I'll borrow a revenue-cutter from the government and chase after him."

Prendergast made quick work of getting up to the Pasque Hotel, his heart in his boots for what might have happened, but he was reassured the moment of his arrival. He ran head first into Jennie, herself on her way to him bearing the news that the colonel had returned to New York by way of Tampa, and that Miss Willoughby, after another stormy scene with the old gentleman, had retired weeping to her room.

"And what has become of Clarence?" asked Prendergast.

"He has remained here," said Jane. "And Bill and Sam have stayed, too," she added.

Evidently Colonel Willoughby meant that his prisoner should be strictly guarded.

CHAPTER XII.

"What's your plan, Bill?" asked Donnelly the next morning as they sat at breakfast, blurting out his question suddenly over his coffee.

"Blest if I know," muttered Prendergast gloomily. "I've half a mind to apply to the authorities for a writ of *habeas corpus*."

"Fine! Bully!" ejaculated Donnelly. "Your rights in the matter are so clearly defined. You are the lady's true guardian, appointed by some supernatural power, superior to the Constitution and By-Laws of the United States of

America, or of the temporarily eclipsed Cuban republic, now in the hands of a receiver. To be sure, you have only known the young person about four days, and were never regularly introduced to her, after you were fished out of the waters of the Hudson River, and the villain who is holding her in duress and keeping her away from you is no more closely related to her than any other man who has married her mother and been appointed trustee of her fortune by her departed grandfather. Your reasons for wishing the law to intervene on her behalf are that while driving a cab in Central Park, New York, one dark night in the month of May you overheard about a third of a conversation that caused you to sniff a rodent, and to——"

"Oh, dry up, Tommy, you make me excessively weary," said Prendergast. He was not any too amiable this morning, after a sleepless night, finding himself somewhat appalled at the magnitude of the task he had undertaken.

"Can't, Bill," returned Donnelly good-naturedly. "I'm not built that way. Time is a moverin' along, and we've got to get busy. You've got to face a few facts. One of 'em is that you are in a footless position. To begin with, you're traveling under an assumed name, which puts you at once on the defensive. Point two is that either in your proper person, or under your alias, you are utterly unknown to the young woman's mother. Point three, the young lady herself has no actual knowledge as to who you really are, and if you were to hale the party into court, the polished Clarence, aided and abetted by his cronies, Bill and Sam, would swear that you were a cabman with a taste for liquor and midnight brawls. The kind of a *habeas corpus* you'd get even with a packed judge here in Havana, where you can do all sorts of queer things if you try under the old Spanish laws, would be a swift one, and just where it would land between your cerebellum and your medulla oblongata Sherlock Holmes himself could not deduce in advance. Why, Billie, even the Chesterfieldian

Clarence would be able to give you the merry ha-ha, if you tried that dodge."

"Oh, I admit all that," retorted Prendergast. "But what the dickens else is there to do?"

"Why don't you take a leaf out of old Willoughby's book, and give him a taste of his own medicine?" suggested Donnelly.

"How do you mean?" asked Prendergast eagerly, for he knew Donnelly of old as a resourceful young man.

"Go into the kidnaping business yourself," said Donnelly calmly.

"You mean that I shall kidnap Miss Willoughby?" demanded Prendergast.

"No, sirree, I don't," retorted Donnelly. "Running off with young women is dangerous business. But what's to stop you from abducting the courtly Clarence, and then when you find Miss Willoughby alone in Cuba, without a protector in a rude and strange land, offering to escort her back to home and mother?"

"What do you think Clarence is, a watch-charm?" asked Prendergast. "I can't walk up behind him, and take him by the scruff of the neck and put him away in my vest pocket, can I?"

"Not having seen Clarence I can't say as to that," retorted Donnelly. "But I have an idea that my revolution could turn the trick for you for a consideration."

"Your what?" laughed Prendergast.

"My revolution," repeated Donnelly. "The alcalde of Zapata. He's one of the bulliest old scoundrels you ever saw outside of a Bowery melodrama. I call him my revolution because whenever I get short of copy down here I give him a wink and ten dollars, and he goes out into the bush and tries to overthrow the government. Of course I'm the first correspondent to get the stuff out, because he and I write up what's going to happen the night before it's pulled off."

"This sounds alluring," smiled Prendergast. "But what can he do for me?"

"Anything he's asked to do at his regularly established rates," said Donnelly. "One revolution, ten dollars

One foul-tackle, fifteen dollars. One real—"

"Foul-tackle?" echoed Prendergast. "What in thunder is a foul-tackle?"

"A foul-tackle," said Donnelly, "is something like this: There's a fellow in town you don't like. His face irritates you. He is an inconvenience, and you think he needs a licking, and it galls you like time to think that you aren't big enough to give it to him yourself. Well, you ring up the alcalde of Zapata, and you tell him that you have a friend in town whose blue eyes give you a pain, and you'd like it mighty if they were changed to black. You add incidentally that you know where there is a fifteen-dollar bill that the owner doesn't need, which he can have if he will give you a nice easy receipt for recoloring the aforesaid optics. He replies that he will think it over, and two days later you are rejoiced to see your friend walking about town with a patch over his eye, and a face on him that looks as if he had hit it against a hammer, and your mail brings you a request to subscribe fifteen dollars to the Zapata Eye and Ear Infirmary. See?"

"And is this sort of thing tolerated in Havana?" demanded Prendergast indignantly.

"Well, it isn't done as much here as it is in New York," replied Donnelly, "but it is done often enough to show that in her smaller way Havana has some of the more convenient conveniences of a metropolis."

"And he charges five dollars more for a foul-tackle than for a revolution, does he?" grinned Prendergast.

"Yes, it's more dangerous," explained Donnelly. "Men have been known to get hurt in the foul-tackle business, but revolutions are warranted harmless, free from blemish, and kind and gentle to children. The only man who has been hurt in a Cuban insurrection in ten years was old Martinez del Campo de Soto of Manzanillo, who got up an émeute in 1906 for a Chicago newspaper syndicate for ten dollars a day and all expenses, and when pay-day came around he was in such

a hurry to get his envelope that he tripped up on his sword and hit his face on the paymaster's knee, knocking out two teeth, and ending the revolution then and there. But my alcalde is an expert. There's no tripping him up, and any day you want Clarence removed from the scene he's the man for the job."

"Pretty risky business, I should say," said Prendergast dubiously. "I don't like the idea of a hired bravo."

"That's the fine thing about the alcalde's abductions," said Donnelly. "The abductee never knows he has been abducted, and while he may be annoyed at certain delays that keep him from home, he's well treated, and when it is all over there is nothing that he can lay hold of on which to base a real kick."

"Where is this Zapata that the old chap is alcalde of?" asked Prendergast.

Donnelly grinned.

"Zapata," said he, "is the name of a great swamp on the southern coast of Cuba. It is the wildest bit of country you ever saw, covered with a dense growth of tall trees and tangled underbrush that make it practically impassable to any but professional woodsmen. A beautiful river about sixty miles long flows through it, swarming with fish and crocodile, and the bird-life in the forest is something marvelous. For centuries this river because of its isolation has been a refuge for those who were agin' the government, and any chap who doesn't like an act of Congress, or a city ordinance, or a decision of the supreme court, or who has had a disagreement with the police, by making a bee-line for the Zapata swamp can find surcease from woe. My friend, old Gualberto Gonzalez, is known as the alcalde of this favored spot by courtesy, and it is a fact that he has there under complete control an army of ragged followers who simply sit around waiting for a nod from the old man to get busy at whatever he wants them to do."

"You know all this to be true?" demanded Prendergast.

"I have been there," said Donnelly.

"The alcalde took me off for a week's crocodile-shoot two years ago. I suggest that we make this trip again—with Clarence. Say the word and we'll take a motor out to the old man's palazzo this afternoon, and close the bargain."

Prendergast shook his head doubtfully.

"It's too much like delivering oneself into the hands of a lot of bandits," he demurred.

"Bosh, Billie!" retorted Donnelly. "You don't understand these people. They're the most harmless folks in the world. There's only two things that any of 'em really want."

"Money and what?" asked Prendergast.

"They don't give a hang for money, except in so far as it makes the other two things possible," said Donnelly. "Give the Cuban revolutionist of today a nomination for the Presidency, and the privilege of sleeping in the daytime, and he is your friend for life."

Prendergast cogitated for a while, and then he broke the silence.

"We might have a look in on your friend," he said. "Is he visible?"

"I guess so," said Donnelly. "He lives out near Marianao, eight or ten miles from here. With a good car we can mose out there in half an hour—he's probably engaged in the peaceful occupation of lying off under a palm-tree, wondering how he can plant a few ears of green corn without getting out of his hammock."

"All right," said Prendergast. "Order the car, Tommy. We'll see what your alcalde of Zapata can do for us."

Pending Donnelly's return with car, Prendergast went to the hotel office, where his eyes were gladdened by the sight of a letter in his box addressed to James Watson, and from it he had the satisfaction of learning that the dawn had brought with it no lessening of confidence in himself in the heart of Mary Willoughby. The writer added that Jane would convey to him daily intimations of how things were going with her, and suggested that if

at a certain hour of every morning he would pass along the highway leading to Colon Park she would be on the lookout for him from her window, and would know from the act of his passing that all was progressing favorably.

"Please cable my mother," she pleaded in closing, "telling her not to worry, and that I am well and happy"—the word was underlined—"and sign it Sylvia. She will know then that it is really from me."

The address followed, and Prendergast, feeling that at last he was able to do something for his charge, made immediately for the cable office, and when Donnelly returned with the car the way was clear for the visit to the alcalde. As for the letter, if Donnelly had been a trifle more watchful he would have observed a rather strange phenomenon in connection with that very unimportant bit of paper, for Prendergast surreptitiously pressed it to his lips before putting it into his pocket.

CHAPTER XIII.

The alcalde, in spite of a face that one would instinctively flee from, was indeed the soul of graciousness and courtesy, and the welcome he accorded his visitors would have done justice to what Donnelly had called his palazzo, even if this had resembled a Spanish château rather than, as it turned out, a shanty of the old squatter type, once a familiar figure on the outskirts of our American cities. With nothing at all in his larder he was simply desolated at the idea that his guests had already had their luncheon, and Donnelly was compelled to vow by all the saints in the Spanish calendar, from St. Jago down, that the next time he came he would bring his appetite with him.

Cuban etiquette seemed to require that several hours should pass in conversation on other matters before the real object of their visit was broached, and despite his impatience to get to the work in hand, Prendergast was delighted with the converse of this strange old man who made Don Quixote seem a possible figure, and was to the full a

true picture of the old Spanish knight. Finally, however, Donnelly came to the point.

"Very busy, alcalde?" he asked.

"No, señor," returned the old fellow. "There is not enough to feed one. The government has failed. It is time for a change."

"How are the crocodiles at Zapata?" queried Donnelly.

"It is a good time, but no one wishes to go," said the alcalde.

"Oh, I don't know," said Donnelly. "My friend Watson here thinks he'd like to have a pop at 'em, and we have another friend just arrived in Havana who'd like nothing better than to get a shy at half a dozen of them. He's a Wall Street man, and it would relieve his feelings to plug a boatful."

"I am at your service," said the alcalde. "When?"

"Oh, say next Saturday," Donnelly answered. "Is the *Gomez* in commission?"

"She is never out of commission," said the alcalde. "One never can tell."

"Billie," said Donnelly. "Suppose you go out and take a look at the scenery for a little while? I have a matter of business I want to talk over with the alcalde. There's a nice comfortable hammock about your size under those sheltering palms in the cabbage-patch."

Prendergast was quick to take the hint, and a few moments later found him swaying drowsily in the hammock. Twilight was coming on, and the anxieties of the night before had left him an easy prey to the seductions of Mr. Morpheus, but just as consciousness was leaving him, the chugging of an auto down the road awakened him, and he sat up to watch its passage. As it approached the alcalde's dwelling it slowed down and stopped. The chauffeur descended and busied himself with its cogs and wheels for a moment, re-entered the car, started slowly up, and then proceeded on his way. It all happened in a moment, but the stoppage was long enough for Prendergast to identify the occupants of the car. The chauffeur was none other than Clar-

ence Willoughby, and in the tonneau sat Mary Willoughby, attended by Jane.

"Whose car is that?" asked Prendergast nonchalantly of his own chauffeur.

"It belongs to our company," laughed the chauffeur. "It's the meanest car I ever saw—always breaking down. Here's hoping that young fellow gets back to Havana without walking!"

"Here's hoping he don't!" muttered Prendergast, and his prayer was answered.

A short while after, Donnelly emerged from the palazzo, followed by the smiling alcalde, and after a short series of *au revoirs*, in the course of which Prendergast endeared himself to the old man's heart by slipping a five-dollar bill into his hand, they started back to Havana.

"He'll do it, Bill," said Donnelly. "Five dollars a day for himself and all expenses. The only question now is how to get Clarence."

"That's what I've been wondering about," said Prendergast. "Clarence is an ass, but he won't put his head into a noose voluntarily. He'll have to be lassoed in some way."

"I'll land him through the Spanish-American Club," said Donnelly. "I'll send him a two weeks' card to-night, and by this time to-morrow night we'll be chums, and I'll bet you a fiver right now that when I suggest a crocodile-hunt he'll fall for it in a minute."

"He won't leave his sister," said Prendergast.

"Of course he won't, she'll go along with us," said Donnelly.

"A woman on a crocodile-hunt?" gasped Prendergast.

"There were two of 'em along the last time," said Donnelly, "and they had the time of their lives. It's nothing but a yachting-trip, Bill. Train to Batabano, yacht to the swamp, launch up the river to a small clearing where we have lunch, launch back to the yacht again, and there you are. There may be a few fleas on the good ship *Gomez*, but if it's a case of fleas and freedom I guess she'll stand for it."

"But how the deuce are we going to get her to go?" demanded Prendergast.

"Oh, well," said Donnelly shortly, "I thought you might do something in this enterprise yourself, instead of occupying a grand-tier box watching the rest of us work. Of course if you can't persuade her the whole thing will have to be called off."

Prendergast accepted the rebuke as meekly as though he had really deserved it.

"I'll do my darndest, Tommy," he said. "But I have my doubts."

"Use your authority, then, as her Heaven-sent guardian. Tell her she's got to go or languish in a Cuban prison all summer. What kind of a kid-glove hero are you, anyhow, Bill?" Donnelly went on. "This is a case where the mailed fist has got to come in."

It was quite dark by this time, and as the car turned a sharp corner they found themselves almost on top of another car, which had apparently broken down in the road. Prendergast's heart leaped into his throat as he realized what had happened, and that his wish of a short time before had been gratified. There was no mistaking the voice of Clarence in the dark as he answered their inquiry as to what was the matter.

"This cursed machine has broken down," he said.

"It's Clarence Willoughby," whispered Prendergast in Donnelly's ear, as their chauffeur jumped out of the car and began to inspect the other machine. "She is with him, she and the maid."

"Can you run this car?" returned Donnelly.

"Yes," said Prendergast. "Why?"

"It's your best chance for a quiet talk," said Donnelly. "Offer to take the lady back to her hotel."

"It'll take an hour to fix this," said the chauffeur, after he had thoroughly inspected the broken-down car.

"Well, see here," said Donnelly, standing up in the tonneau, "my friend here is an expert at running these machines. Why not let him take the ladies back to town, and my chauffeur here can assist you with yours?"

"Very kind of you," said Clarence, "but I don't think—"

Prendergast reached over into the front seat, and securing the chauffeur's goggles, put them on. He was not going to take any chances of being recognized.

"I'm afraid it's going to rain," Donnelly added. "And rain here is wetter than any ten Atlantic Oceans you ever saw."

"There isn't room for us all in your car, is there?" asked Clarence.

"No, unfortunately," said Donnelly. "But, I tell you, he can take the ladies back, and then return here for us. You'll do that, won't you, George?" he added, giving Prendergast a backward kick with his heel.

"With pleasure," said Prendergast in a deep bass voice.

"Well, it's very good of you," began Clarence, hesitating, "but—"

"My name is Donnelly, correspondent of the New York *Whirald*," interrupted Tommy, running along as if the other had not spoken. "It is part of my business to look after Americans in distress, especially the ladies. May I assist you, madam?" he added, offering his hand to Jane, as he descended into the road.

"Do you think we had better, Clarence?" asked Miss Willoughby.

"I don't see what else we can do," replied Clarence gloomily. "Thank you, Mr. Donnelly. I haven't a card with me, but my name is—" Here Clarence hesitated again, but the ever-ready Donnelly was on the alert.

"I saw your name on the Pasaque register, Mr. Dickinson," said he, "and have already had the pleasure of cabling the fact of your arrival in Havana to the *Whirald*."

"I wish to introduce you to my sister, Miss Dickinson," said Clarence.

"And may I present my friend, Doctor Hathaway of Cincinnati," said Donnelly in his suavest manner.

Prendergast, already overrich in aliases, murmured his pleasure in the dark, and from behind the goggles.

"Now, Hathaway," Tommy rattled on masterfully, "if you'll take these ladies to the Pasaque, and then come back here for us, I'll be much obliged.

I'm going to stay here and see Mr. Dickinson safely through this operation."

"All right, Donnelly," returned Prendergast gleefully. "If I don't return you'll know the machine has busted."

Donnelly approached Prendergast, and whispered in his ear.

"Don't be a fool, Bill," he said. "Bide your time. This isn't your best bet. Wait for the alcalde."

"I'm wise," muttered Prendergast, and after Mary Willoughby and Jane had been safely bestowed in the tonneau, with a parting salutation to Clarence, he pulled the lever, and the car leaped forward into the night.

"To the Pasaque, is it, Miss Dickinson?" he asked.

The girl hesitated, and then in a trembling whisper, she began.

"Oh, I wonder if I dare ask you, doctor?"

"Ask me what?" he asked.

"To—stop just for a moment at the Inglaterra, and ask for a Mr. Watson for me," she quavered. "It is very important."

"Why, of course, my dear young lady, I'll do as you say," said Prendergast. "But it will be a rather foolish thing to do, for I happen to know that Mr. Watson left Havana just before noon to-day."

"Left Havana?" she cried, with dismay in her voice.

"Yes, to go to Marianao," said Prendergast. "And he has not yet returned."

"And have you any idea where he can be found?" asked Miss Willoughby anxiously.

"Yes, Miss Willoughby," said Prendergast. "He is sitting right here now, talking to you."

And to prove it Prendergast drew the car up into the light of a street-lamp, and let it stream full upon his face.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Oh, I do believe in Fate!" said Miss Willoughby fervently after a long pause, during which she gazed earnestly and wistfully into Prendergast's face,

as if she half feared he would vanish as mysteriously as he had come. "And I shall never, never doubt that mine rests in your hands, and that for some mysterious reason which perhaps we shall never understand you have been sent to care for me until this dreadful complication is over."

"And then?" asked Prendergast.

"And then," faltered the girl, "then I hope that you will find me as grateful as I ought to be—as grateful as you would wish me to be."

She paused for a moment.

"Oh, Jane," she cried in hysterical happiness, "to think that we are free!"

The little cry of joy smote heavily upon Prendergast's heart. Poor child! She mistook this temporary relief from espionage for freedom, and it was his to undeceive her.

"It would be nice to think that if it were only so," he said as he guided the car slowly along the highway. "But I am afraid, Miss Willoughby," he added, with an effort, "that you will have to be patient for a little while longer."

"Patient?" said she, regarding him with a puzzled eye. "Patient? Why? Can't we go now?"

Prendergast shook his head.

"Oh, Mr. Watson," she implored, "please, please, take me back to-night. I can't go back to that awful hotel again now that I see a chance——"

"It is not a chance, Miss Willoughby," said Prendergast slowly. "We couldn't get an inch out of Havana to-night even if we were to try. There is no way out. The Tampa boat has gone, and in a place like this I don't know where we could hide—at any rate, there is no place where you could hide away successfully until the next boat leaves, and even if there were, a cable to Tampa from your brother would stop us, and another to Colonel Willoughby in New York would tell of your escape, and with all that man's great power arrayed against us we should be worse off than we are at this moment."

"But," said Miss Willoughby impatiently, "we are doing nothing, and meanwhile——"

"There are times," said Prendergast gently, "when to do nothing is to do the most. You do not understand your own position, Miss Willoughby, and I did not at first——"

"And if you had understood would you have come?" she asked directly.

"A thousand times over," was Prendergast's fervid response. "I know Colonel Willoughby better now than I did," he went on. "He has resources that we have not dreamed of, and he dares do things that very few men have dared to do since the days when brute strength was the measure of right. He can be defeated in only one way. That is by surprise. Give him an inkling that things are going wrong, and the merest intimation of how they are going wrong, and he is armed with all the expedients of the devil himself. If we are to win out we must take him off his guard, Miss Willoughby, and to do that we must make haste slowly."

"I suppose—I suppose you know," she answered unsteadily. "But this awful suspense is very hard to bear, and when I think of my mother——"

The girl's voice trembled, and her sentence ended in something very like a sob.

"Yes," said Prendergast sympathetically. "I understand all that, my dear child, but it will all come out right by waiting. If we should disappear now, you and Jane and I, within two hours your brother Clarence would have Havana ransacked from top to bottom, looking for us. Before morning the newspaper correspondents would all have it, and every port of entry in the United States would be on the qui vive against our coming. Worst of all, you would be in positive danger, which to say the least you are not now, as the tenth of June approached. Colonel Willoughby, thwarted and grown desperate, would leave not a stone unturned to prevent your discovery and denunciation of his crime."

"Crime?" repeated Mary. "Is it a crime——"

"I do not mean this, Miss Willoughby," said Prendergast gravely.

"There is another?" she gasped.

"I am afraid so," said Prendergast. "Did it ever occur to you, Miss Willoughby, that he does not wish to be asked for those securities on the tenth of June because there are no securities left to be turned over to you?"

"No securities left?" repeated the girl, half-dazed by the suggestion. "Why, that can't be. They are mine. Colonel Willoughby is only a trustee of the—"

"Since your grandfather's death what check has there been on Colonel Willoughby in the management of the estate?" Prendergast asked. "Who has ever thought or had the authority to investigate and see whether or not he has used those securities for his own purposes—even sold them?"

"But how could he sell them when they were not his to sell?" persisted Miss Willoughby.

Prendergast smiled sadly at the girl's naive innocence.

"I am afraid," he said, "that a little detail like that would not stand very much in John Willoughby's way if he happened to find himself on the wrong side of the market, and that's where he stands at this moment. Colonel Willoughby, my dear girl, is a desperate gambler, and just now he is fighting for his life."

Miss Willoughby sat silent under the shock of the suggestion. This was piling Ossa on Pelion. To be deprived of her liberty was bad enough. She would recover that some time, but her long-cherished ambition to restore to her mother that which some whim or mistaken idea of caution on old John Sharpless' part had deprived her of, frustrated—that indeed filled the girl with dismay, and from the depths of her own fears she could understand what Prendergast meant when he intimated possible danger to herself from Willoughby, driven into a corner, with time to turn around.

"Now, mind you, Miss Willoughby," Prendergast continued, "I am not saying that all this is true. I sincerely hope it isn't, though I am honestly afraid it is. I haven't mentioned it to cause you further anxiety. I have sug-

gested the possibility of a defalcation to convince you of the necessity of taking the colonel by surprise on the tenth of June, and at such an hour as will leave him helpless to do you harm. With twenty-four hours' grace there is no telling what he might not do to injure you, and you can readily see how great the temptation to injure you is if his honor is actually involved. I mean by that, simply if he is in danger, through your presence in New York on the date in question, of being found out in a real crime, definite penalties for the commission of which are actually written on the statute books. You cannot afford to take on the mere impulse of such a moment as this, irked by a restraint that has been imposed on you by force, the risk which a dash for freedom to-night would involve, when by waiting a week or even two we shall be able to sail quietly for New York, and beard the lion in his den, unsuspecting, and with his claws clipped."

"You terrify me," shivered the girl. "I don't know what to say."

"Say yes," said Prendergast. "And don't forget that you are watched over by friends who mean to see you through in safety."

Whether Prendergast meant angels or—well, what he was himself gradually becoming under the influence of those starry skies, aided and abetted by a delicious propinquity, all intertwined with the spirit of romance, unusualness, and charm, I cannot say. At any rate I know that here in this moment of her seeming greatest helplessness Prendergast's eyes opened to a great fact, and that was that he cared a great deal more than he had hitherto guessed, not about how this thing was coming out as a mere matter of rescue, but what would happen when it was all over as an adventure, and he had come face to face with the solid fact of existence without Mary Willoughby alongside.

The car had by this time come into the city, and the run to the Pasque was all too short for Prendergast. The night was growing finer and the moon more beautiful at every passing mo-

ment, in spite of Donnelly's foolish prognostications of rain, which were in fact advanced more with the purpose of stampeding Clarence into letting his sister return in the auto with Prendergast than because he had any real convictions on the subject of the weather. Lured on by the prospect of a little longer interview, Prendergast guided the machine along the Paseo de Tacon, and thence on up the hill from which the fortress of El Principe commands so wondrous an outlook upon the gulf.

Arrived at the summit he brought the car to a standstill. Leaving Jane in command, he assisted Miss Willoughby to alight from the car, and together, walking to the brow of the hill, they looked out over that marvelously beautiful expanse of southern sea, all bathed in the soft mellow light of a perfect moon in a fleckless sky.

Both were silent for a time, entranced with the beauties of the scene before them, the stars above and the lights of Havana below, and off in the distance the harbor in which a number of vessels lay, lending a more varied color to the picture with their red and green lamps.

"There is the story," said Prendergast at last. "Here we are surrounded by deep waters. On all sides of us are great gloomy fortresses, prison-houses filled with dungeons, deep and unescapable, in which countless thousands of human souls have passed to their last accounting, forgotten even of their friends. Over there," pointing to the northeast, "those stars look down upon freedom—the freedom that will be ours if we only have the patience to wait. Cuba has waited over four centuries for her release, and it has come. Can't we be patient, too, for a little while?"

"Was Cuba patient?" asked the girl.

"Cuba waited," he replied gently, "and when the champion selected to free her from bondage came she placed herself in his care—and she won."

"Yes," said Miss Willoughby, "but how long before the champion will claim his reward, and Cuba no longer be free?"

"Well," said Prendergast, fixing his

eyes firmly upon hers, "will it be so hard a fate when the champion—gets his reward?"

Miss Willoughby looked away, but I think she saw the trend of his thoughts, and the hour had not struck for that.

"How long must we wait?" she asked simply.

"Not very long," said Prendergast, getting a grip on his feelings once more. "In a few days we hope to be in action."

And then he told her of his visit to the alcalde of Zapata, expatiating much upon the cleverness of his friend Tommy Donnelly, and actually now and then as he told of some of Tommy's doings eliciting a little silvery laugh that was good to hear, although when he heard her laugh and caught sight in the moonlight of that face lit up with smiles, even though it was but for an instant that the sadness faded from her eyes, he found himself thinking more profoundly than ever of that possible reward the champion might at least hope for, even if he never really got it.

He controlled himself, however, and proceeded with his statement of their plans. He told her very plainly that his only hope lay in the temporary sequestration of Clarence in the haunts of the crocodiles, which at first she thought very horrible; but when she learned that those creatures, like most of their human neighbors, ask only to be allowed to sleep undisturbed in the sun and sought no quarrel with any man, and that a part of the agreement was that no harm should come to the kidnaped youth, she was reconciled to the plan.

"I don't believe he'll go, however," she said. "His father has instructed him not to let me out of his sight."

"That," said Prendergast, "is why we have arranged to take you with us."

Miss Willoughby looked at him in amazement.

"Me?" she cried.

"Oh, yes," said Prendergast. "You are going. I thought you would like to know."

"But—" began Miss Willoughby.

"Miss Willoughby," said Prender-

gast, "in the bright lexicon of trouble there is no such word as but. As your commanding officer I am regretfully compelled to issue General Order Number One instructing you to hold yourself in readiness to repel crocodiles."

He fell into his old-time light bantering mood, that set so becomingly on him, but which to those who knew him best was merely a surface indication of an added firmness underneath. Miss Willoughby felt this as he spoke, hesitated a moment, and then yielded. He had already shown himself so loyal to her interests that she could not find it in her heart to thwart him in any of his plans, and then, too, that long look in his earnest eyes had told her that she might have confidence in this man to the last.

"General," she said, mocking his manner, "to hear is to obey. I am ready."

Prendergast gave a deep sigh of relief, for he had feared that she would demur at the trials of that trip.

"I wish there were some other way, though," she murmured.

A mad idea flashed across Prendergast's mind, induced no doubt by that glorious moon—the same old moon that for countless generations has turned wise men into fools or fools into wise men, I'm not sure which.

"There is one other way," he said, turning, and again transfixing her with his eyes.

"What is that?" she asked, all unsuspecting.

"Give me the right to say to all the world that I——" he began.

She caught the drift of his mood before he had time to finish.

"I think we had better return to the hotel," she said.

But Prendergast noted that her voice was tremulous with something that he had not caught in its cadence before.

CHAPTER XV.

The process involving the seduction of Clarence Willoughby, as a Cerberus set by Beelzebub to keep watch over his prey, was neither unduly prolonged

nor especially interesting. For about three days, using the Spanish-American Club as the field of battle, all the personal and alcoholic artillery that Donnelly could bring to bear upon the young man was wheeled into action, and Clarence, not being at best a massive fortification, soon capitulated.

The idea of a crocodile-hunt appealed to him strongly, and when he was informed by Donnelly that it was quite as much of a lady's game as a man's, and that it was not necessary for him to leave Mary behind in Havana, he became not only enthusiastic, but eager. As for Miss Willoughby herself, acting as we have seen under orders from her commanding officer, she assented to the plan, with, however, a becoming show of resistance which effectually concealed any inward enthusiasm she might really have felt for so strange a project.

Wherefore, the following Monday the whole party, excluding Bill and Sam, found themselves on board the good ship *Gomez*—Donnelly, Clarence, the alcalde of Zapata, and his crew of well-trained villains; Mary Willoughby, and her maid, Jane. Prendergast, too, was along, but shipped as a member of the crew, lest Clarence, seeing him, should suddenly recall him, and become suspicious.

The yacht, after traveling from the Port of Batabano, came to anchor off the mouth of the Huataquunico River, which flows through the Zapata swamp; but I cannot properly say with all serene on board, for Prendergast the night before, as the vessel having embarked her passengers steamed on her way through the waters of the Caribbean, had the pleasure, from his point of disadvantage among those before the mast, of seeing the flirtatious Tommy sitting in a steamer-chair aft, smoking cigarettes, and rivaling the moon itself in its beaming upon Mary Willoughby; and she, nerved up by the excitement of the enterprise upon which they were engaged, developing a spirit which enabled her to return to Tommy pretty nearly as good as he gave.

It was trying indeed for Prender-

gast to hear the merry laughter of the party on the after-deck, and, ever and anon as he peeped over at them from his place of concealment, to observe Donnelly's insistent and apparently much appreciated solicitude for his Dulcinea's comfort. However few crocodiles fate might have in store for them on the morrow there was indubitably already on board the yacht a green-eyed monster with considerable of a bad temper rankling in his breast.

At dawn the first boat-load started up the river, laden with provisions for those who by noon would feel the need of them; and among those sent along to see them safely conveyed to their destination was Prendergast, clad in the habiliments of labor, and about as villainous in appearance as any of his comrades. Later, in another launch, the aristocrats followed—Donnelly, a perfect picture of Mr. Nimrod, clad in khaki, a varied assortment of pockets decorating his manly chest, and his rifle already loaded for crocodile; Clarence, enthusiastic in his own way, and dressed as appropriately for a Newport promenade as for anything else, blasé and sleepy at this early hour, and it may be a trifle headachy, for he had brought his flask along; the alcalde, masterful and grimly silent; and Mary Willoughby, a high color mantling and much becoming her cheeks; and finally Jane, wide-eyed, speechless, and pale. It is fine, Jane thinks, to be mixed up in a romance, but she does hope there ain't going to be no rough-house about it!

As the party progressed up the river they were much impressed by the primeval isolation of the scene. Tall trees rose up out of the swamp, their gnarled and knotted roots plainly visible above the ooze whence they sprang and in whose lush depths they were nourished; rank grasses of infinite variety were visible to the eye in the crystal depths of the water, waving to and fro in the eddyings of the current. Through the forest came the endless chatter of rich-hued paroquets, mingled with the sometimes shrill and sometimes musical call of other birds

of marvelous plumage, and the whir of many wings. Now and again a heron, spotlessly white, perched on a tree-top, outlining its graceful figure against the wondrous blue of the sky, and then stretching its wings soared away, and disappeared in the hazy distance.

Suddenly Mary's enchanted eye was attracted by what appeared to be a short log floating on the surface of the river directly in the path of the launch, and simultaneously the crack of Tommy's rifle echoed through the forest.

Clarence in a facetious mood began to speak of the joys of shooting cord-wood on the wing, when the log began to behave strangely. Coincidentally with the crack of the Mauser it seemed to come to life, splashed angrily about for a moment, and then made a mad dive for safety into the long lush grass of the river-bed.

"What in thunder is that?" demanded Clarence.

"Crocodile, of course," said Donnelly. "What did you think it was, a giraffe?"

"Well, I suppose it's good sport plugging away at a piece of fire-wood, but what have you got to show for it?" said Clarence.

"Nothing when you hit 'em that way," said Donnelly. "Just wait till we catch one of 'em asleep on the bank. Then you'll see some sport. If they get into deep water they're gone."

The boat came now to a sharp turn in the river, and lo, peacefully sleeping upon the shore lay another crocodile—a good-sized fellow this time, about eight feet long, his snout stretched out in the sun and his eyes closed. Suddenly disturbed by the tap-tap-tap of the approaching launch, the reptile awoke, but too late. The alcalde, Tommy, and Clarence, all blazed away at once; one of them poked his tail, another spat-tered his nose with the oozy mud on which it had been resting, and the third, doubtless the alcalde, cut a clean gash across the back of his neck, severing his spinal cord, and sending Mr. Crocodile to his last account. There was a convulsive spasm that shook the

creature's gigantic frame for an instant, and then the dreaming cayman flopped over on his back, quivered, and died. In obedience to the alcalde's orders the launch stopped, and two sailors nonchalantly stepped overboard, seized the defunct reptile by the tail, and with difficulty lifted him into the stern of the boat.

"There is a Gladstone bag for you *in puris naturalibus*," said Tommy, as the boat started on her journey up the river again, to which Miss Willoughby replied, her eyes dilating with the excitement of it all, that she'd rather have it checked than try to carry it herself.

In this fashion the morning wore along. A half-dozen experiences of the same kind followed, until about the time when the sun had reached its highest point, when the pangs of hunger began to manifest themselves, and several of the party grew drowsy under the narcotic influence of a tropic day and the heavy odors of the forest growths. A point in the river was reached, suggesting an island in the swamp, but in fact a low promontory with a little coarse green grass growing upon it. It was quite a clearing for such an environment, and solid enough under foot for the party to disembark for their noonday meal. This they found already spread, the men who had preceded them in the early morning having taken care that appetite should not be compelled to wait upon dilatory service.

Busy among these considerate servitors, Mary Willoughby, as they approached the landing, could see one whose broad shoulders and step quicker than the others' would mark him in a crowd of better men, and there is no denying that there came to her at that moment an acceleration of her heart-action as she thought of what his presence here meant to her, and for the first time perhaps realized how much she had missed him since a certain moonlight night on Principe Hill. On landing, however, she could get no sight of this special individual, for he effaced himself completely, leaving the service of the luncheon to his comrades,

and himself finding occupation in an inspection of the launch, assuring himself that its supply of naphtha was sufficient to the demands now soon to be made upon it, and that the oarlocks of the dory were stanch and true.

At luncheon a feverish gaiety prevailed. Donnelly was the very soul of fun, and Clarence grew drowsily facetious, all of which, however, failed to destroy a certain nervous excitement in Jane and Miss Willoughby. Neither of them was quite equal to the demands of the occasion, but Clarence's condition was such that this was a matter of small consequence. Finally the moment for action arrived.

"We are all ready, alcalde," said Tommy in Spanish. "When do we start back?"

The alcalde politely referred him back to himself for a decision.

"What do you think, Dickinson?" asked Donnelly, turning to Clarence. "Three o'clock suit you for starting back?"

"Fine," yawned Clarence. "It's only half-past one now. That'll give me a chance to get a nap—this air has made me dopey as the dickens."

"Good," grinned Tommy. "Feel kind of stretchy myself. I guess I'll follow suit."

And so it is that Clarence fades away from our vision. He will come out of his nap in a few hours, and he will wonder where he is, and why only he and the alcalde and three of the alcalde's men are left there on the promontory in the midst of that great swamp. He will also wonder where the others have gone, and he will ask very pertinent questions in a very impertinent manner, and it will irritate him most awfully to discover that the alcalde cannot speak English—a merely temporary incapacity—and is a stupid old fool, and an idiotic ass, and a number of other things into the bargain; but he will not learn the truth until the eleventh of June, when the *Gomez* will return to the mouth of the Rio Huataquanico to get him and convey him in safety back to Havana, in ful-

filment of a contract, sealed, signed, and delivered astrally, and the consideration paid in advance materially, to which James Watson, Esquire, of Nowhere, U. S. A., is the party of the first part, and the alcalde of Zapata is the party of the second part.

What Clarence will say and do when he discovers his plight and realizes that the bird has flown from the paternal cage, we shall not set forth here, for truly it is all of it unfit for publication. What we will set forth, however, is the fact that twenty-six hours later a yacht suspiciously like the *Gomez* reached the port of Tampa, and landed four passengers there—one special correspondent of a New York newspaper; one gentleman of leisure answering to the name of Watson; one very tired, but very happy young woman verging on twenty-one years of age; and one lady's-maid, a certain Jane by name.

Three of these were promptly clapped into quarantine by a hard-hearted official of the United States government, there to stay for the space of ten days. The fourth, the special correspondent, escaped this by returning to Havana, feeling it necessary to apprise a certain eminent financial plunger in New York by means of daily despatches from the Cuban capital that all is well with the Dickinson family in Havana. It seemed necessary to do this, because lacking a daily report from his son Clarence the eminent plunger might suspect that the boy was drinking again and take steps that would prove inconvenient to two fugitives that we know of.

But that quarantine! It continued till the twenty-ninth day of May, and New York is thirty-six hours away. It will be only by the narrowest kind of a squeak that our wanderers can hope to reach the office of John Willoughby Esquire, of Wall Street, on the tenth of June.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was a rarely beautiful day throughout the country, but there were heavy clouds lowering over Wall Street. No one knew just what was likely to

happen before night. All sorts of rumors were afloat, and most of them had to do with our acquaintance of the hansom cab and the *Roraima*, Colonel John Willoughby. In the pleasing vernacular of finance, the colonel was alleged to be "scraping the bottom of the box," by which it was meant that every blessed thing that he owned and had hitherto kept in his safe-deposit vaults that even remotely resembled a negotiable security had been taken out of its warm nest and used for collateral to see him through.

It was suspected that he had even tried to borrow something, nay anything, on his wife's jewels, and it was rumored, too, that—well, there were people still left in New York who remembered old man Sharpless' will, and that Willoughby was the sole surviving trustee of that great fortune; and not a few of these were wondering whether or not that, too, had gone by the board to save this plunger in his desperate straits. There was a deal of head-shaking on all sides, and unfortunately for the colonel not much sympathy anywhere. Such friends as he had made he had not scrupled to use as need had arisen, and it was a sad feature of his present predicament that acting upon his advice not a few of these were, comparatively speaking, as badly off as himself.

Three of the companies in which he had been largely interested had gone into the hands of receivers overnight. One big trust company that was reckless enough to have his name on its board of directors had withstood a two days' run of heart-breaking proportions, and was opening this morning with the betting on the curb rather against the likelihood of its keeping open until lunch-time; he had been thrust bodily out of the directorate of two national banks, and altogether he was getting an inconvenient amount of free advertising.

But he was making a very impressive fight, and to hear him talk you would have supposed that there was a pipeline connecting his offices with the Bank of England, or the sub-treasury,

or something, through which at the psychological moment an endless stream of gold would flow in response to his pressure of the button that controlled its operations.

Outwardly Willoughby was far more composed than anybody with whom he came in contact, and less disturbed than he was that day on the *Roraima* begging Prendergast not to let him venture too near the rail; and the anxious clerks in his office and the worried lines of his followers congregated about the tickers in various parts of the country still gathered some little comfort from the old man's marvelous serenity.

He had walked smilingly into his office, with as pleasant a good morning to everybody in sight as he ever greeted them with in the hours of his greatest prosperity, and to the reporters he had expressed the cheerful opinion that things were looking pretty good to him. When his door closed behind him, however, there were visible certain things that his iron will had kept others from seeing. As he sat at his big desk and fumbled over his accumulated correspondence his hand was so tremulous that he could not hold a paper steadily enough to read it, and he had to lay flat on the table the few documents that he tried to read before he could get at the tenor of their contents.

Suddenly his whole massive frame shook with a series of convulsive shudders, and he clutched the oaken sides of his armchair in an effort to steady himself. But for the firm grip of his jaw, and the white tensity of his pursed lips something like a cry of pain would have rung out upon a startled corridor without and informed the waiting and expectant world that John Willoughby had at last succumbed to the nervous strain of it all, if not to the financial.

At the end of five minutes he recovered his composure somewhat, and he pressed the electric button at the side of his desk.

A stenographer entered and a nervously rapid dictation of many letters began. At the conclusion of this the colonel rose from his desk, put on his

hat and was about to leave the room, when an office-boy entered bearing a card.

Willoughby looked at it irritably, and read the name of Mr. William Prendergast.

"Not in," he said sharply. "Can't see anybody this morning."

"Sorry," said a familiar voice from the doorway, and Willoughby, glancing angrily in that direction, saw James Watson standing before him. In his nervous state the discrepancy of names did not suggest anything to his worried mind.

"I can't see you to-day," he snarled. "Great Heavens, man, don't you read the newspapers?"

"Yes," replied Prendergast, with a smile, "but I don't believe all that they say, colonel."

"Well, that's sensible—you needn't," retorted the colonel. "But you must know that this is no time to come fooling around here. I'm busy."

"I rather thought our appointment, Colonel Willoughby, was of sufficient importance—" Prendergast began.

"Appointment?" roared Willoughby. "Who in blazes gave you an appointment with me to-day?"

"The provisions of the last will and testament of John Sharpless," Prendergast answered calmly.

Willoughby tottered and sank down heavily in his chair.

"What do you mean?" he gasped out breathlessly.

"What I say," said Prendergast. "Your stepdaughter, Miss Mary Willoughby, is entitled under the provisions of that instrument to come into full possession of her estate to-day, and she has authorized me to make a formal demand upon you for her securities."

Willoughby's already ashen face went gray and his tongue crackled in his mouth as he retorted.

"I know of no such arrangement," he answered thickly. "Have you the necessary papers?"

"I have no papers from her, colonel," said Prendergast, "but—"

"Then get out of here—get out, do you hear me? I won't see you. I

won't talk with you. Get out or I'll have you thrown out."

The man was beside himself with rage, and he fairly screamed his words.

"You will not let me explain, colonel," said Prendergast, holding his ground. "I have no papers, sir, but I have what is better—the young lady herself."

Prendergast stepped backward to the door, and opening it called into the outer office; and a moment later Mary Willoughby, tanned by exposure to the southern sun and somewhat dusty from travel, for they had arrived at Jersey City barely a half-hour since, stood not accusingly, but commandingly, before the collapsed financier.

For a moment not a word was spoken. Willoughby, with fallen jaw and the look of a cornered rat flashing from his eyes, gazed at the two young people, and then with a convulsive effort he rose from his chair.

"I am ready," he muttered hoarsely. "Wait! W-wait just a moment!"

He walked with unsteady step to a door at the far end of his office, leading into an inner, more secret sanctum, that holy of holies in which his unholy transactions for many years past had had their inception. He disappeared within, closing the door after him, and a moment later that chapter of the human comedy that has to do with the career of John Willoughby was closed forever.

One shot echoing through the offices, and a heavy fall upon the floor of that adjoining room told the story.

"It is as I feared," whispered Prendergast to the frightened and cowering girl at his side. "Come!"

CHAPTER XVII.

An hour later, as soon as they were allowed to leave the scene of the tragedy, they went down the stairs together, and Prendergast called a cab.

"The Hotel Powhatan," he said to the driver as they entered. "It will be good for you to see your mother again," he added.

"Yes," she said wearily. "But I hard-

ly know how to tell her. It will be a dreadful shock. She is utterly unprepared for anything like this. We are penniless."

"Don't worry," said Prendergast. "Even if the worst comes to the worst, you know you have James Watson to fall back on—specially appointed delegate of Fate."

"You have been very good to me," said Miss Willoughby, "and I shall never be able to thank you sufficiently for all that you have done. But I could not think of—"

"Giving James Watson his reward?" he asked. "What was it we said about Cuba that night in the glorious moonlight on Principe Hill? Some day the champion will claim his reward, and Cuba will no longer be free? Suppose just for one moment that—"

"Please don't," pleaded Mary. "I couldn't. I can't even think clearly now. You have done too much for me as it is, for me to permit you to make any further sacrifices. You are good to offer help, Mr. Watson, and later on I may have to accept it, but not yet."

The clanging carrier-wagon of an afternoon newspaper rushed by them, laden with extras, its sides blazoned in huge black letters with the announcement of Willoughby's suicide.

"Your mother will have the news before we get to her," said Prendergast. "You'd almost think these newspaper men knew in advance what was going to happen, and had the whole story set in type before the event."

"Looking back on it all," said the girl, "my only wonder is that we did not all see it. It was inevitable."

"And can we see into the future in the light of the past?" asked Prendergast. "I'd like mightily to know what is coming to me."

"We are surrounded by too much wreckage to see clearly," said Mary. "Cuba waited," she added slyly. "Cannot you, too, be patient?"

The rest of the journey was made in silence. The morning had been so full, the excitements of the past weeks so

great, that neither of them was in a mood for the ordinary talk of the day, and the one subject that pressed insistently on Prendergast's mind now that they were on the verge of separation, the very thought of which was become intolerable to him, must in the very nature of things be repressed for the moment.

He delivered the tired girl into the hands of her waiting mother at the Powhatan, and returned for the first time in many weeks to his own apartments, having first assured Mrs. Willoughby and her daughter of his intention to call upon them that evening. He avoided the club, feeling no inclination whatsoever to subject himself to a cross-examination at the hands of his fellow members; and promptly at eight o'clock he returned to the hotel, where he was ushered at once to Mrs. Willoughby's private parlor.

Arrived there, he found Mary alone for a short while, somewhat recovered from the fatigue of a nervous day, and he made up his mind on the instant that it was his cue to be "masterful."

"Miss Willoughby," he said as he seated himself by her side, "there is no use beating about the bush. This little copartnership of ours can't end here. We can't have had these weeks together for nothing, and I want to say to you that you ought to consider very seriously what right you have to interfere with the decrees of Fate."

She looked at him with a tired little smile on her face.

"Dear me!" she said. "I shouldn't dare to interfere."

"Very well, then," said Prendergast, "Mr. Fate has announced to me that he has held in reserve for the completion of my happiness the one person, the one girl in the world, who can bring it to me. He told me so in Havana. He told me so that night on Principe Hill. He told me so on the Caribbean Sea, and he whispered it in my ears day and night, for ten full days in quarantine, and he is still whispering it to me. And when I asked him her name, and where she came from, he said he didn't know where

she came from, but that her name was Mary Willoughby."

Her face grew first pale and then crimson as Prendergast spoke, and doubtless she would have made some sort of a reply, but just then her mother entered the room. Prendergast rose, and very much astonished the good lady by greeting her with a kiss.

"We have something important to tell you," he observed as he took the old lady's hand in his own. "I should have spoken to you about it before, but there hasn't been much opportunity. Mary and I think that you ought to give up living in Indiana, and come here to New York and look after us."

"Us?" said Mrs. Willoughby. "Who is us?"

She turned and looked at her daughter in half-smiling, half-puzzled wonderment.

"James and I," said Miss Willoughby softly, and as she said "James" a pang of jealousy shot through Prendergast's heart. He had temporarily forgotten all about James Watson.

And so the thing that had been designed for these two playthings of a pranksome Fate came to be, and it can be said with confidence that it was a love-match pure and simple, for when Prendergast started in to tell Mary Willoughby that very old, but very beautiful story that men never tire of telling or women weary of hearing, she was already in his view as penniless as he had found her helpless, and he was to her not William Prendergast, the young millionaire of clubdom, and one of the really smart members of the Smart Set, but a certain James Watson who had no visible means of support save a hearty and pleasing assurance of manner that was an indication that if he could be induced to work he could at least make a living.

That he must have lost his position she felt tolerably confident—who wouldn't, leaving his office without warning to anybody as he had done and staying away a whole month? She felt equally confident, however, that once he had a chance to explain, if his employer had any kind of right feeling in

him, he would be restored to that particular though mysterious occupation which had hitherto kept the wolf from his door.

She hinted as much to Prendergast, but he with a dubious grin intimated that he thought it rather doubtful.

"He's a hard fellow to get along with," he replied.

"But surely if you tell him," Mary went on.

"Won't do any good," said Prendergast. "He was born mean."

"Not if I asked him?" she queried.

A twinkle came into Prendergast's eyes, for a passably good idea had flashed across his gray matter.

"You might write to him—I wouldn't call upon him if I were you," he said. "His name is William Prendergast, and his address is the Athenaeum Club."

So Mary wrote to the difficult and mean Mr. Prendergast, and told him all that had happened to James Watson, and expatiated on how faithful he had been, and said such a lot of other things that when Prendergast received the letter his heart tingled with joy, and he sat down in his club and wrote back to Miss Mary Willoughby saying that, while he had by no means as much confidence in James Watson as she had, nevertheless he would take the matter into consideration. He added that, while Watson was not at all a bad fellow, he feared he was lazy, and at times incompetent, and pig-headed, and rather given to play than to work.

The letter said in closing:

Nevertheless, my dear young lady, I am very anxious to please you if I can, and certainly if everything is as you say it is Watson should have another chance, especially if he will promise to give up driving hansom cabs. With your permission I will call upon you at your hotel to-morrow afternoon, and I can then satisfy myself as to what is proper to be done by a talk with you on the subject of Mr. Watson's strange experience.

Miss Willoughby replied by messenger that she would be glad to see Mr. Prendergast at four o'clock, and hoped to be able to convince him that James Watson was a man of integrity, at least,

even if he was not unduly clever, and at any rate worth trying again.

At four o'clock Mr. Prendergast arrived at the Powhatan, and Mary and her mother went down to the reception-room to receive him, and talk over the prospect of getting "James" back to work again.

Six months later a sturdy young man recently married, his face all aglow with happiness, drove around the Central Park in the city of New York one night in a hansom cab, his bride of three weeks seated at his side.

"Isn't it queer, dearest," he said as they rolled by Magowan's Pass Tavern, "six months ago I drove you around this very road—I on the box, you inside here? My very name was unknown to you, and I was utterly unaware that such a woman as yourself had ever existed. A mere prank brought us together, a series of accidents which no man could have foreseen gave me the chance to serve you, and now we are—man and wife!"

"It is all very strange," she murmured, nestling closer to him. "Life hangs on a slender thread, and it terrifies me sometimes when I think of how little a thing might have kept this great happiness away from me forever."

"It is an assurance," he put in, "that all this was meant to be—oh, from the beginnings of time it was meant to be. In that lies our security, sweetheart. We were not snatched from our everyday walks in life that had never touched before, and brought to this, for anything but the fulfilment of some great purpose."

"I think that, too," she answered, "and I think I know what that great purpose is."

"So do I," he said simply.

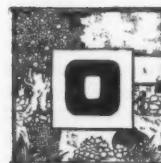
"Love?" she asked.

"Love—the sweetest, greatest, the only real purpose in life," said Prendergast.

And he leaned over and kissed her without even stopping to wonder whether or not the jehu perched on the box above was peeping in through the little skylight in the roof.

THE RACE

By Marie Van Vorst



N this brilliant January afternoon Caux gave itself up to sport. The floor of the Palace Hotel glistened with the prints of snow-shoes while the clatter and clink of skates rang their winter music aloud. Every one was either lugeing, skeeing or skating, under the vigorous sunlight that flooded Caux and that poured through the glass roofs of the pavilion, filling the hotel hall with gold.

Girls in sweaters, muffed to their ears; men in long wool jerseys, muffed to their ears; white caps, red caps, fur-bound caps, flashed through the hallway as the gay troop went by, merrymakers fetched together by the out-of-door life, by the fascination of exercise and by the freedom of holidays.

Marc Devereux had been shocked at the ugliness of the women in their outré, deforming costumes; to his observation they lost sex and charm.

The American man wore the conventional dress of the fashionable traveler—the spectator of life, however, he told himself he had taken already part in the game of living. He had married a wife and his experiences had been exactly what his intimate friends who had *not* taken wives had prophesied.

Devereux considered himself "an infernal fool." He said this to the end of his cigar as he stood in the blazing sunlight.

The scene without was superb. The

sides of the mountain ranges, up to their keen peaks, gleamed with dense, intensely white covering, and the cup of the valley bathed with clouds lay below him white as the snow-peaks above. He looked into the chalice of vibrating blackness, into the floating, blinding vapor whose veil obscured and hid Terri, Montreux, and Lake Leman.

In the farthest window of the hotel hallway stood the figure of another guest. At the first sight Devereux gave a start of recognition, but the second glance showed him the lady was a stranger.

She stood looking down into the valley, dressed in a short white serge skirt of faultless cut, displaying the beautiful lines of her figure. Her boots were stout, but well made and small. A white knitted jacket covered her to the knees. On her head she wore a white felt hat with a trailing veil around it, and about her neck a stole of snowy fox-fur.

Although fitted out for sport she was as well charmingly dressed, and she was the only figure among the mass of disfigured womankind whom Devereux found attractive.

As she stood there in the vivid sunlight the lady had the effect of being a gleaming thing. There was a positive radiance about her figure, and a shock went through Marc Devereux, a vital, vibrating sting, and his body felt as though it had been metal, smitten upon until it rang.

He wondered whether his nerves during the late strain that had been

put upon him had become so shaken that he could not bear the appearance of a lovely woman without emotion. The lady's eyes met his as she turned and left the window, went through the room, down the corridor, and out into the hotel rotunda; and Devereux followed her at a distance.

She spoke to no one, no one addressed her, and as she passed through the doors into the brilliant cold without, the New Yorker who continued to follow her realized, meeting the icy air, that he had left the hotel without coat or hat.

"Give me," he said to the porter, "my fur coat, my hat and stick, there, at the end of the cloak-room, will you?"

And the delay was sufficient for him to lose sight of the lady.

He lit a fresh cigar, turned up his coat-collar. Two men in Russian costumes kept the coasting-track clear. The road was strewn with boys and girls, men and women on bob-sleds and on great and little light runners. The coasters flashed by Devereux over the track made smooth as glass by the irons of the bobs.

The belle of the hotel the night before had been carried in with a broken ankle. The man with whom he had played cards in the smoking-room had been killed the afternoon before, and Devereux had seen him carried by, a cloth as white as the snowfall over his face. There were broken fingers and scratched faces and minor accidents every day. The cheeks of the coasters were crimson with health and cold. Their eyes sparkled. The white sweaters, the red and green worsted coats and caps, the furs and mufflers flashed before his eyes.

Watching his chance, he crossed the roadway and slowly walked toward the skating-rink.

The circle was deserted save for one skater who, at the far end of the ice, moved slowly along making curious figures on the gray surface. *She wore a white serge skirt*, her small feet were in heavy boots. Devereux gave a gasp.

"By Jove! How beautifully she does it!"

And the lady shot past him like a winter breeze. He watched her a few moments, then going over to the pavilion made the boy fit him with a pair of skates, and started out. He had not been on the ice since his school-days, and though he lost his balance at once he found it furiously, as quickly poised himself, and then struck out.

On his first round the woman skated slowly past him, and as he heard the creak of her skates some strange excitement made him shake like a leaf. He would have fallen, but in the second he stretched out and caught a living arm, and by holding on fast saved himself.

"I beg your pardon!" he stammered.

The lady laughed. "You haven't skated since you were at school, I dare say."

"No, not in twenty years."

"Oh, it's easy enough if you get your poise again; one really never forgets those things."

Devereux let himself be led by her, and without another word they skated round the pond side by side, she with her hand under his arm.

He paused for a second, dragged off his fur coat and threw it on the bank. Then the glow of the flight shot through him. He tingled and his newly awakened senses began to sing. The hand on his arm was warm, strong, and yet the touch so exquisite that it seemed to him that with such a hand to touch, with such a hand to hold, he could like Dante go through hell. Devereux felt like a boy again, young as though he had never been old or miserable, never been married or suffered or—Heavens! Here he turned his ankle and would have fallen heavily but that she held him well.

"Stupid!" he cried. "What a wonderful race we've had. Just wait a second, it's a loose rivet, I'll fix it in a jiffy."

He bent to do so, and as he raised himself she had cruelly left him and was skating away to the other side of the lake, radiant, graceful, but distinctly escaping him.

He stumbled across the pond—she

wouldn't let him overtake her. He was on the point of asking the skate-boy who the lady was, but he didn't want to learn her identity from anybody but herself.

In making her way toward the hotel, she walked so rapidly that Devereux could not overtake her without running, and when he reached the hallway she had been swallowed up by the throng of returning coasters, and although he looked for her everywhere he didn't see her again.

Devereux was an American aristocrat, so far as there are any of such a breed; well born, well furnished with this world's goods. Until the failure of his marriage he had been content. He had lived well, and as far as he knew like a thoroughbred; he had never harmed any one without paying to the fullest extent of his generosity and his ample means. He had always been more or less a pessimist in a mild way, self-sufficient and rather egotistical, and the blight his marriage had put upon his career was something which he had not been able to reconcile with his ideas of things as they should be.

The same afternoon he made a survey of the rooms. Failing to find his companion of the morning, he took a book in which he was interested, went into the reading-room and sat down in one of the 'big leather chairs. The lugeing races of the year were on for the next following days. An Englishman came up and asked Devereux if he would not judge with the others. Devereux laughed and told him that he didn't know a "luge from a skee!"

"You won't luge?"

"Not unless I were pining to enter glory. I haven't been on a bob in twenty years."

The Englishman left Devereux to his book, but after reading a page or two with little attention to the words he put the novel down. Who was the woman whose hand for a magic half-hour had rested on his arm? She was evidently alone in the hotel, and a woman of easy manners, not to say more. Some English or Parisian actress? Her English had been too perfect to admit

of any foreign blood. Whoever she was, she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen; in two visions she had smitten him through and through. *Who was she?* Well, he didn't much care.

If the woman he had married had only been like this! *Why* had he not waited! What did he know of this woman who was no doubt some other man's possession already? At the thought, with a mental cry, he opened his eyes—for he had been musing with them closed—and there, with an open book in her hands, sitting near-by at a little table he saw her again.

Devereux sprang up and without a word of apology went over and sat down by the stranger's side.

"You dashed away so fast this afternoon that I could not follow to thank you," he said.

"To thank me?"

"Yes—for that jolly race we had. How marvelously you skate."

He remarked she had not changed her dress in any detail. In contrast to the conventional dress of the women she looked like a rare lovely snowbird. "Possibly," Devereux thought, "she may be companion to some person of distinction." Otherwise she would have joined one of those groups of women and have changed her dress.

Devereux, slow as a rule to make up his mind, could have told this woman then and there as she bent her blue eyes on him that he loved her, that he was hers to the end of both their lives. With a keen understanding of the humor of this sudden whirlwind that had struck him, he laughed at himself and pulled himself into something like a conventional attitude.

"I have seen you before, I don't seem to recollect the place, but I have seen you. My name is Devereux. I am a New Yorker."

"I think we've not met," she answered quietly, "that is, I do not remember it."

"There is something very familiar about you, however," he went on eagerly, "extraordinarily familiar. Why, when I looked at you at first, and even

as you spoke, I could have sworn that—”

She put her hand up as if to warn him, and said almost sternly: “I have never seen you before—we could not be more utter strangers.”

“It sounds unkind to hear you say so.”

“It’s quite true.”

Nothing came to his lips in reply but a violent protest and his passion—these were the only things that asked utterance from him.

She appeared to wait for Devereux to recover his presence of mind.

“You’re alone here?” he asked her.

“Yes.”

“You like the sports?”

“Oh, immensely! I have always loved every kind of outdoor life and freedom.”

She caught herself up here.

“But why won’t you go on telling me?” he urged.

“Because—what difference can it make? Why should *you* care what my tastes are?”

In her tone there was something like melancholy.

“Why should I care?” Devereux leaned toward her. “I should like to know everything that interests you,” he said intently, “everything in which you take pleasure. All your life—all of your thoughts!”

She didn’t seem in the least surprised at his ardor, but lifted her beautiful hand like a barrier and murmured: “Wait! Oh, wait!” And Devereux had all he could do not to seize the hand and crush it in his.

“Wait?” he breathed. “For what?”

“It takes years to learn all you ask,” she smiled, “it takes a whole lifetime.”

Devereux had it on his lips to exclaim:

“Oh, no, it doesn’t, it takes nothing but love—nothing else!”

When she said, “And what if I should ask you in turn all these questions?” he cried out, “Oh, if you only *would*,” as eagerly as a boy; then his face clouded and he drew back a little.

“Without your asking I feel as if I must tell you something of myself. To

begin with, I am a miserable, unhappy man, a wretched failure—and I’m married.”

She showed no surprise or even interest in his outburst of confidence.

“My wife left me a year ago. She’s going to divorce me. I’ve come up here to Switzerland to meet her and to put an end to the wretched farce.”

The woman’s serene beauty and her tranquil expression didn’t alter as he blurted his words out. She appeared to read his thoughts with her quiet eyes as she gazed benignantly on him. He had bowed his head and was not looking at her as he drew a pattern of some mental image with his fingers on the table.

She asked him after a second: “What is your wife like?”

He threw up his head and laughed shortly.

“What is Paula like? Really, I don’t know how to answer you. She’s awfully reserved, very cold, and very indifferent.”

His companion made no comment, and he left the description of his life to return to herself. She had disappeared so suddenly from his sight on the ice that he was afraid she might elude him again at any moment. The impulse that urged him made him hurry in what he said and gave an intensity to his usually indolent voice as he persisted.

“I have seen you before. I have certainly seen you somewhere before.”

This time she did not refuse him. “Since you seem so certain of it, think then.”

He rested his head in his hand for a moment and then said dreamily as if in sleep: “Ah, wait—it’s coming now clearly. It was four years ago at—Ah, I remember! Wiesbaden! I *have* seen you before. I remember you.” He caught the word “dearest” short on his lips.

Now the stranger urged him to go on.

“Wiesbaden? What day was it? It’s strange it should stand out to you so. I wonder if it *is* possible. But

it's quite true that I *was* in Wiesbaden ten years ago."

He continued: "Nothing happened of interest to the world, but a great deal to me. That day I asked the woman I eventually married to be my wife."

As his companion said nothing further Devereux went on slowly: "I fancy I should hardly have been able to recall the time and the place, but you were familiar to me the first minute I saw you in the big hall; indeed, I was going to speak to you. Did you observe it? You are my wife's type. You look like her. And," he added as if to himself, "after all, a man never loves out of his type."

He had certainly been very much in love that day at Wiesbaden.

The stranger now rose, as she did everything, tranquilly.

"It's very late," she said gently, and her companion did not dare to beg her to remain.

"You say you're alone here?"

And with his words he met the serenity of her gaze. Her eyes were of a peculiar, deep blue, like the waters of a lake held round by snow-peaks. Yet they were not cold, but clear and profound. He wondered afterward if he had not stared at her to rudeness, for after they parted he seemed pervaded by her personality, by the light of her regard, as if his senses and himself had been steeped in the blue prisms of her eyes. He must have looked at her without speaking for several seconds before he eagerly asked:

"Shall I see you again? And how—how?" Then he followed with: "I *must* see you again to-morrow."

And although she did not say yes to this she took his outstretched hand and grasped it in the same strong, vital clasp with which she had upheld him on the ice. At the touch so great a confusion of words sprang to his lips, so wild a tumult beat within him that he did not dare to say another word for fear he would overstep all reasonable bounds.

"If I speak to her as I feel," he thought, "she will think I am either intoxicated or a madman."

But singularly enough he knew in his heart that, no matter what he dared to say, this woman would understand him. He ventured to give her one swift glance as she let his hand drop and his look took her in from head to foot, swept her, found her perfect, from the point of her white shoe to her glorious little head where her fair hair came from under her white felt cap and the veil fell around her like a cloud.

Something in him that tore his fibers, that made him suffer and yearn till his bones contracted, till his essence cried out to her, proved to him that he wanted her with all his soul. She was the perfect woman—the perfect mate. Under his breath he said a word or two and she must have heard their meaning, for she put both her hands out between them and drawing back, melted from him as a snow-image might have melted away.

He imagined that she, too, said a few words, stammered them, and he fancied that their import was: "To-morrow, until to-morrow."

He cried: "You won't then go away without letting me know?"

"No, no!"

Inclining her head she bade him good night and went out of the door. He saw her pass among the women in their evening dresses—tall, slight, and buoyant, with a fine sweep of her short skirts, a spirit and a spark within her that no one else possessed. She had the effect of being wonderfully young and yet as old as all his memories of life. She left him infused, penetrated, vitalized by her.

As he paced the long reading-rooms up and down Devereux realized that there would be no sleep for him that night; he had given up his soul to this strange mate.

II.

He had not been left by her for more than five minutes when a man he knew and whom he had supposed to be on the other side of the Atlantic ran up against him, much to Devereux's surprise. Devereux had detested this

man, Romaine, and during the past few years had been bitterly jealous of him. At the very sight of him here at Caux he understood why he was in the Alps. For the same reason that Devereux was here, to see the same woman. With Romaine's appearance Devereux forgot the stranger who had just left him, and as he barely shook the New Yorker's hand the crude practical details of his own life, its perplexities and its problems grew to be the only real things, for until this second he had forgotten everything but the woman in the serge dress.

"Where have you been keeping yourself?" he said to Romaine. "Have you been here long? I didn't know you were in Switzerland."

No, it appeared that the other had only just turned up, arriving this morning by the Simplon from Milan way.

"Going on?" Devereux asked.

"To St. Moritz," Romaine answered after a pause.

And Devereux, although he turned pale, rather liked the man's aplomb or rather his sincerity. Romaine, then, as well as the husband, knew that Mrs. Devereux was not at Caux, but in the Engadine. This man had been in love with Mrs. Devereux for years, and Devereux thought it natural that in the course of events, after the divorce, his wife would become Mrs. Romaine. The two men stood side by side in the pathway in the hall, while to and fro the skaters and lugers passed with the fire of open air upon their cheeks and in their free bearing.

As Devereux sat toward midnight in his room, under the swinging electric light, he threw himself down on his lounge and read over carefully his last letter from his wife. Enigmatically cold and uncompromising, it could only leave him to conclude that their ways had definitely parted. She had been gone from him six months, and this letter which had reached him in New York asked that he should consent to a final end to their married life. Devereux had answered this letter by sailing for Europe, and he was not the man in any way to thwart the wishes

of the woman by whom he had never really been able to make himself liked.

He had expected to find her in Caux, only to learn by a late letter from his banker which waited him here that she had gone on up to St. Moritz.

Now Devereux saw that he was not the only man who was following. Romaine had the nerve to tell him that he was also going on as well! There was no letter here from Paula asking the husband to come. It would be rather burlesque for both men to arrive together. Well, Romaine would have to yield the way to the husband for a fortnight or so until Paula could be set free. Romaine would have a free track after the husband's visit. And Romaine would have a free track, too, after the divorce. His thoughts here returned to the woman who had bidden him good night only a few moments before, and as he thought of her it seemed that the free Alpine winds floated with their pure, cold delectableness filling his room. He sprang up from his lounge with an exclamation that was like a summons, and flung his window open to the January night. Except to drink it in with delight he was insensible to the intense cold, for it was like wine, and from over the peak the smell of the snow, the breath of the upper skies swept their divine sweetness to him. The stars, hard and brilliant, scattered their scintillating petals over the heavenly floor, and far down in the valley a peal rang out from a hidden church-tower to be answered by a farther, softer bell a little on in the frozen hills.

Devereux thought of a poem of winter he had always liked, and its music soothed him agreeably as he repeated the words:

REQUIEM.

"Over every mountain hoary
Falls the twilight like a cloud.
And above the winter's glory,
Faint at first, then ringing loud,
Comes the voice of belfries holy;
One by one they croon and chime.
Valley calls to valley lowly,
Song and hymns of evening-time.
Under star and lucent skyland,
Calling, calling thro' the mist,

From the lowland, from the highland,
 Over peaks of amethyst.
 Now they cease and die and falter
 One by one to silence all
 Till the cold peak's stainless altar
 Hears no more the Vespers' call.
 Hark, far down the mountain hilly
 One sweet voice persists to sound,
 In the twilight deep and stilly,
 One alone the wide land round.
 Belfry, old and gray and lonely,
 Belfry, that I love so well,
 All alone my Kilchberg only
 Ringeth out its evening-bell."

He would like to share his transport with the dear woman to whom it now seemed he must always have an inclination to reveal his feelings and his spirit. He stopped as he brought the idea there. Yes, that was it: *to reveal his soul*. He had never had such a desire before. It was certainly the sort of creature she was that had made him feel like this! He longed to be to her what she was to him.

As he had gone into his room that evening the letter which he had picked up to reread had lain by his wife's picture. The handwriting was vigorous, revealing a woman of character, and of passion as well. But Devereux looked at the page callously. Romaine had seen this writing also; no doubt the other man had many of these letters.

As he held the pages in his hands he tried to bring back the incidents of the day at Wiesbaden when he had first been engaged to Paula, and to remember where he might have seen the other woman. But he could only faithfully and with a singular persistency recall his wife Paula. They had boated all the afternoon and he had been for the first time alone with the beautiful young Virginian. She had been educated in a convent, brought up with singular precision and formality. She had never been alone with him before, during so long a time as this afternoon.

He had decided for several days past to ask her to marry him. On that day he had courted his sweetheart like a boy; he could remember every pretty detail; it was impossible for him to fetch to his recollection the image of any other woman whatsoever. The hotel had been full of women, and many

of them were beautiful, but he was very sure that his eyes had not been charmed by any one except his fiancée.

Here an imperious insistence of thought forced him to follow the course of his short married life; he found it decidedly commonplace and dull as he reviewed it. Springs in London and Paris, summers at Newport, and yachting-trips, auto-trips, shooting in Scotland, fishing in Norway—they had done everything together. His world and their joint fortunes had slipped in between them, and every rift as soon as made was filled up by a foreign element, and as he thought of his wife she was a stranger to him.

Why, this woman here, a chance guest in an Alpine hotel—he felt he knew her better than he knew his own wife! The woman of the pure eyes would be incapable of the follies, of the extravagance to which beautiful Paula Devereux had descended. The husband had indeed gone his own way and permitted her to go hers. Henceforth they would be free to follow these divided directions as they chose.

He tried hard to free himself from the image of his wife, to put his foot on the jealousy that lifted its head as he thought of Romaine, to crush down a certain disgust, for he wanted to admit the thought of his new friend. But he was surprised to find how difficult it was to bring any other woman to his mind. His stranger wouldn't come, and with a droll idea that the long and intense consideration of his wife had possibly made him unfaithful to the new love, he finally threw himself on his bed to sleep away the hours until he should be able to find her again.

But Devereux utterly failed on the next day to see her anywhere. Finally, as he went out through the hotel he remarked, through the windows of the hall, the gleam of a white serge skirt against the snow. His heart leaped, he flung himself out of the door to follow, but she took a sudden turn around the hillside and he was obliged to climb like a chamois in order to reach where she finally stood.

When he did reach her side he was out of breath. The wind had risen and blew through the mist of clouds that clung about the peaks, and he was forced to struggle with the element. The stranger clung to a tree to steady herself, and Devereux, too, caught hold of the pine and held on, his breath coming quickly, his cheeks afire.

"What a climb! What a pull!" he cried. The wind was louder than his voice. "Where have you been? I've not seen you all day anywhere."

He noticed that she still wore the identical dress; even the folds of her veil, her collar, her scarf, were just as he had remembered them. But she was fresh as a lily, fresh as the narcissus flowers that come in the spring to these mountains.

Like white rays of the sun itself, bare of gloves, the stranger's hands clung to the tree.

She pointed to the distant valley where the wind was beating the trees about.

"There lies your road," she cried, "to St. Moritz. You'll be taking it to-morrow—or shall you stop over for the races!"

"Oh, yes, yes!" he answered. "I shall stop over for the races."

And she interrupted: "But you did intend going on to-morrow?"

"I did intend going on to-night."

Just then a gust of wind came reeling and staggering round the tree to which they clung. It struck them violently and brutally, it blew her garments about him, her veil wrapped his face, her dress brushed him. Her hold on the tree had loosened, and he put his arm round her and steadied them both. He had only to turn his face to meet her own. As if the very soul in him were filled to overflowing he cried out one word of great passion.

The mist had settled down upon them thick and dark. She had caught the tree again. He felt that he no longer supported her. A sudden icy chill seized his body from head to foot, and he felt the cold of desolation at his very life's center. His arms fell from the woman's form as though they

were struck off like irons from living flesh.

Devereux reeled—staggered, and he was sensible that her arm caught him and held him. Then the mist suddenly lifted, and he saw that he stood quite alone on the peak, clinging to the pine.

As later he made his slow descent, he cursed himself for a fool and a boor.

"I terrified her. I have mortally offended her. She of course will never see me or recognize me again."

What had he done? Well, if she had been conscious of his passion, that was more than enough to make her slip from him. At any rate, she had escaped and gone before him down the hillside to the hotel, and he had lost her once more.

III.

When Devereux went to his room that night there was a storm sweeping over the peaks.

All the legions of the wind were let loose, and the snow was falling fast. After a little, tired of listening to the clarions of the air and to the shrieking element that cried round his tower-room, he looked out on his balcony and what was his surprise to see, standing, leaning over the railing, *the white figure of the woman whom he had so constantly sought*.

For a few seconds he watched her immovable figure as he might have watched a snow-image evoked by a winter's tale. She wore the same simple dress, the same graceful veil.

Wonder stirred in Devereux, and awe, as though that at which he was looking were not quite real.

But as he gazed she lifted her head, and her warm lovely cheeks, her blue eyes, her sweet, human nearness struck him with an agreeable shock of naturalness, and his heart leaped more normally. It was the *rest* of the world that was unreal, not this woman! *She* was true!

Devereux was by her side in the next instant.

"You here on my balcony! Then these are *your* rooms near here? You've been here all these nights and days? I thought these rooms were deserted."

Without replying she walked along the balcony to his window, of which the long doors were open.

"See," she said, "you are letting in the snow-drifts and the cold."

Without an invitation she crossed the snowy threshold into Devereux's room. Like a man enchanted he shut the window to. First the curtains of the snow dropped before the pane, then the longer curtains of the room. Devereux stood like a man enchanted, drinking in the beauty of his visitor, letting himself realize the dazzling fact that of her own accord she had come to him here. He could have fallen at her feet and covered her hands with his caresses. With any other woman he would have done this, but in this woman there was a power intangible which held him back.

"I'm always looking for you," he murmured. "To-day you actually dissolved before my eyes. I couldn't have made you angry, and you left me without one word. Did I?"

On his table was a woman's photograph. The stranger lifted it and made no reply.

He said impatiently: "There's not much reason why that picture should be here. I've carried it from habit. I shall never carry it any more."

He took the picture from her hands almost bruskly, but she protested: "Wait, let me look at it. Is she beautiful, like this, really?"

"I suppose that she is, people say that she is," her husband replied.

The guest regarded the photograph intently as if she were trying to find something familiar in the face. "It's quite true, we are not unlike."

But now Devereux cried obstinately: "No, no, you're not at all alike! I thought you were, but I was mistaken."

Pressed on, carried on to an actual disloyalty, he continued: "My wife will soon be free to marry the man she loves, and I shall be free as well."

Back of the stranger the gusts of the storm swept to and fro against the pane.

"A man she loves?" she repeated. "I wonder whether you are sure that she loves him."

And Devereux replied: "She sent for him to come to her, at any rate. Current talk says that she has loved him always."

And the perfect stranger to whom he told this intimate secret of his wife's dismissed the subject as though it were none of her affair. Looking at her companion, she smiled upon him a peculiarly radiant smile, her eyes rested on him almost tenderly.

"Why do you always wear the same dress?" he asked. "I have never seen you in another than this simple frock. It becomes you, of course, wonderfully, but it's so distinctive, so marked. Is it a peculiar costume? Have you taken vows?"

She laughed at his question, and touched her frock with one light hand.

"Isn't it a good frock for the snows? Isn't it a dress for the open? You don't like it, then? Am I to think you don't like it?"

He exclaimed "Like it!" and came forward. "It's the most beautiful fabric and stuff I've ever seen. I don't know you," he went on, "or what you are, whether you are some man's wife or whether you are free; I don't know your name or your class or your race, but—"

The stranger's blue eyes were fastened on Devereux, and with no effort to silence him she drank in his words.

"You have changed my whole life," he breathed intensely. "The very first moment I looked at you and met your eyes I knew that everything had changed."

As he spoke to her his breath came fast; he realized how sincerely he was the victim of an overmastering passion, that he loved this perfectly strange woman as he did not know he could ever love a human being.

She repeated almost inaudibly: "You say that you knew. Knew *what*?"

"Why, that you are my mate," he

said deeply, "my complement, my other self. We hear that such things can be, but not many men find it out before they die."

He had come close to her with his words, and would have taken her in his arms.

"Tell me your name," he pleaded. "What may I call you?"

A great blast of the storm blew against the long window, dashed it madly open with a sweep of blinding, drifting snow. The wreaths of flakes struck Devereux in the face, the window-pane shattered, and while he exclaimed and put out his arms to her to draw her to him in the storm and shield her from it, she slipped out on the balcony, eluded him, and disappeared.

He followed her, calling her, trying every window, but each one was locked. He beat against the panes of every balcony door, like a madman, in vain; then, covered with snow and cold, he went back to his room. The photograph of his wife lay face up in a pile of drifted snow that had blown in on the floor just within the window's space.

IV.

The following day, some minutes before the funicular train was to take him down the mountain, Devereux walked over to the lugeing-track, cleared for the race. The sun dazzled his eyes, so bright and sharp it shone against the miles of snow, against the white peaks. The fair limpidity of the atmosphere brought out in fine relief every obstacle, but even in the crude daylight and in the sunburst, the upper heights were shadowy and full of every beauty; every tree wore a shining mask, the trunks and branches were overlaid with ice; the pine-cones were hung with wreaths of snow, and down through the crystal forests wound the track of the train Devereux had planned to take. In and about the black crows circled, flapping their great wings through the Christmas trees; and deep and unfathomable the lines of the Alps cut distinct and jagged lines

across the blue of the heavenly floors, their crests blindingly clear against the azure.

His night had left him shaken, he was not himself at all and was unrefreshed by the dreamless heavy sleep. His feet dragged, he felt overpowered as by a narcotic. But through his stupid daze one decision had forced itself: *He had determined to go to his wife.*

He was going to her before Romaine could get there, going to see her before any other man could interfere; he was going to discover what she intended to do with the rest of their lives, after the divorce. When she had told him, when she had herself decided without a word from him, he would be able to go his own gait. He could then follow to the ends of the earth the woman whose name he did not even know.

He was in traveling-dress; he drew on his gray gloves, and when he finally stood at the extreme summit of the race-track, he realized that he had walked away from the funicular station, in the opposite direction, and that in a second he would be surrounded by the racers, for the entries had only just been opened.

Romaine had entered for the races. His luge stood among the rest. Below him, a couple of hundred feet, the little funicular engine steamed and puffed. Devereux pulled his faculties together and started down toward his train.

The woman who came suddenly in his path, around the turn of the white road, held out her hand to him. Her beautiful eyes rested on him with benign clearness; the purity of her gaze as well as its depth was the secret of her power.

The snows that during the last twenty-four hours had covered all the Alpine world seemed to have scattered their choicest flakes on her. Fine sparkles rested on the soft crown of her hat, on her shoulders, and hung like jewels on her veil. She was so dazzling, so brilliant, that Devereux, transfixed, enchanted, stood without return-

ing either her greeting or her smile. He was enthralled by her red lovely lips, her softly mantling cheeks, the buoyant life of her.

"Why, you're not going away before the race?" she asked, coming over to his side. "See! They are just about to start! See!"

The starters in their crimson and green velvet Russian dress, picked out by their silver badges, and swathed in their furs, came up with the scores in their hands. The contestants were all men, in sweaters and mufflers, small caps on their heads, high-booted, in leggings or wound around with flannel bands to protect their limbs. They crowded up to the hilltop, one by one they took their sleds and bobs, one by one they registered, pinned on their badges, were marked, noted in time, and one by one they started away.

Devereux's train gave a warning whistle. As if the woman feared it might call him she laid her bare hand on his arm, but he did not stir nor even hear the summons. The animation, the life, the color, the excitement, and the cries of "way" and "gare," the flashing of the sleds held his attention, and the stranger's hand rested on the arm of his coat.

Romaine was the last to come up. He nodded to Devereux curtly, and there was something like hate in his face as he glanced at the husband of the woman he loved, something like scorn. Romaine was a fine figure in his brown tweeds, in his crimson knit sweater, in his leggings and cap. He threw away the cigar he had been smoking, strapped himself on his bob, and was shot off in the track. He was the best luger at Caux, an expert, fast and furious, and his runs had won the record all through the Canton de Vaud.

The starters hurried off the contestants, one by one, until the last man had left the peak.

Then, at Devereux's side, the woman said: "Come, don't you want to enter the race? It's a wonderful sensation, a great sport. Come!"

Devereux turned to her mutely; they were alone on the crest of the rugged

hill with its white shroud about it, with its crystal trees and its jagged peaks, its dark velvet pines, and its evergreens into whose branches the ice had not penetrated.

All Devereux's being leaped to his lips and his eyes. Scarcely above a whisper he said:

"I'll follow you to the end of the world. I didn't want to tell you so, yet. I was going first to my wife, but you've taken it all in your hands. Now I must speak or die." He repeated gravely: "I love you, love you, no matter who you are or what the future may be."

With the same heavenly benignity she looked upon him, but with apparent indifference to his words. "Listen!" she said, lifting her head. "The first mark has been passed; Romaine has passed it." She used his name naturally enough. "Come, come, or we'll be too late!"

She seized his arm and turned him to where in the snow Devereux saw a long white bob-sled, forgotten evidently. She drew it toward them.

"You're not serious," he protested. "I don't know anything about lugeing. I've never been on a sled."

"Come, come!" she urged. "I know I can steer."

Before he could speak further he found himself behind her and she seated before the guiding-wheel, and the next moment, they, as the others had done, shot out into the long, slim, shining, glassy track.

How they flew! There had never been a speed like this! They passed the hotel, the funicular, the objects on either side of the road. He was conscious above all of the deadly cold, of the piercing biting wind that sucked at his lips, that beat at his ears, that went through his hair like the fingers of death. It seized him round his heart like a pain. Then this sensation passed. He could have heard nothing in that marvelous flight if it had been shrieked at him close to his ear-drum. The world seemed all blue and white, made of ice, made of cold, under which there was a fire.

Around one curve where the sleds sprang into the air and settled again to the track, he caught her instinctively around the waist. He heard her laugh; it came back to him like a breath of life, it was the only live sound, *the only live thing in all that terrible ecstatic run.*

Holding her thus around the waist he was close to her. Only by so doing could he save himself from death. There was death on that milk-white arctic road, there was death in those runners, *and Devereux knew it.* There was death in one false turn of the guiding-wheel; he knew he looked death in the face. He had not cared for life before, but now he wanted to live. The woman vitalized him and was the fire under the cold. *And yet he was cold.* He was unconscious of passing any one or anything on the road, although they must have passed every one of them all.

Just below Glion he saw in front of them Romaine's crimson sweater. Like themselves, Romaine had outrun all the rest. The race was then between Romaine and himself.

He called in the woman's ear: "Can we pass *him*?"

She made no reply.

Romaine's speed, as theirs did, accelerated on the last lap. Once—as their sled had done—Romaine's leaped into the air like a drop of blood spurtting from a blow. Instead of careening and dashing off into the hill-slope at the side, the luge fell plumb into the path again and shot on, and even their mighty speed did not overtake Romaine.

"He will win!" Devereux cried in her ear. "He will win!"

And again she made no reply.

However, well on, down past Glion, they gained on Romaine. Just before the end of the race they gained. By this time even the excitement of passing a rival had become dim to Devereux, in whose arms the woman had seemed to melt and infuse and transfuse. There wasn't a fiber of his blood that didn't seem permeated by the white woman at the guiding-wheel of the bob.

He said in her ear those things which might make a woman lose her nerve, or start her heart, but she never flinched or wavered. Finally, just at the end, at his appeal, at his madness, at his wooing, she gave something like a disembodied sigh and turned—and doing so she met his lips.

At that moment, like mad, they passed Romaine. Devereux heard a snap and a crash and he knew no more.

When he was picked up and stood on his feet it was at the goal. The starters shook him, dashed the snow from him, gave him a gulp of brandy, and one of them said in broken English:

"But you had no right to enter. You were not booked. You might have caused great damage on the track."

And Romaine, covered with snow, his red sweater shining out like blood under the white patches, said angrily: "You must have lost your senses, Devereux. What in God's name made you do such a thing? You almost killed me and you know your score doesn't count!"

His score! Devereux laughed in Romaine's face.

"I want to get down to the Grand Hotel," he said. "I feel rather queer."

And indeed he looked so queer, so decidedly out of the ordinary, that Romaine put his dislike in his pocket and thrust his arm through Devereux's and led him off to the hotel.

After leaving him in the room he had taken for about fifteen minutes, Romaine came back to Devereux's door and knocked on it and went in. Devereux seemed to have come back somewhat to his senses.

The face of the man who came in to Devereux was hostile. It was evidently difficult for Romaine to speak for a few seconds, then he thrust a couple of despatches out toward Paula's husband.

"These have been lying here for you a couple of days—in the post-office of the hotel. It seems no one knew where to find you. Mrs. Devereux is ill; she has had an accident. I have letters as

well from St. Moritz which tell me about it."

Devereux was already tearing open his despatches. Even in the shock the news gave him he remembered Romaine and how well his wife knew him. In his present daze the news from St. Moritz came too hard upon his last great race through the winter air.

He put his hand to his head. "When is the next train?" he asked.

"There's one leaves for Zurich in just five minutes," said the other man, who, on his part, hesitated. Then, turning on his heel, he added quietly: "You can do as you like. I shall, of course, go directly to St. Moritz by the train."

And Devereux, without answering, followed him out of the room.

V.

Neither man spoke during the long journey to St. Moritz, and if Devereux could have come sufficiently out of his lethargic reverie to observe his companion he might have pitied Romaine, on whose face was despair. But Devereux, unconscious of any one, was like a man disembodied. He thought only of the race he had just won, of the race through which he had flown, of the kiss that had met his lips; beneath the horror and the shock of the news of his wife's illness, under his bewilderment and mystery, there was the tide of a great joy—and a great tide of fear and wonder. His senses had not yet come back to him.

Twelve hours later Romaine and Devereux stood in the spacious hallway of the Kulm Hotel at St. Moritz.

There one of the doctors met them and said: "Will you come up-stairs, Mr. Devereux?"

As soon as he perceived that permission had been given to the husband and that he counted for nothing, Romaine took his part, saying appealingly to the other man: "You will, of course, Devereux, as soon as possible let me know how things are?"

The room into which Devereux was

shown at the top of the hotel was like a high-swung cage over a snowy abyss. Through the windows the morning was slowly stealing. Beyond the Alps, beyond their ghostlike peaks, the last stars were fading in the path of the sun. There were two nurses at Mrs. Devereux's bed.

Devereux's wife lay immobile, her golden hair around her lifeless face. The intense blue of her eyes shone through her closed lids like gentian flowers under the snow. Her lips were red, and she suggested a snow-image to which witchcraft had given life. One bare arm lay without the coverlid.

"In her fall," the doctor told the husband, *"Mrs. Devereux struck her head. She has not given sign of life for eight days. We are basing all our hopes on you."*

Material existence did not seem to have part with the inanimate figure of the woman before Devereux. As he looked down upon her she was at once beautiful and strange, familiar and mysterious. He had not spoken a single word to any inmate of the sick-room, and the physician naturally thought that the husband was almost mad with his grief.

"What a pity," he said, "that you could not have come before, Mr. Devereux! Her soul has gone out of her; it is a case of suspended animation. I'm afraid she will pass from this sleep into death."

Still the husband made no answer. His senses were numb. He felt himself still under the sway of another woman; although the figure on the bed was that of his wife she did not seem to belong to him.

After gazing down upon her for a few moments, Devereux turned abruptly and went toward the window. Believing that the stricken man was trying to hide his emotion, the doctor considerately drew the nurses aside.

Below Devereux the lake lay, like a bowl of jade, green, intensely green, and everywhere his vision was met by the eternal whiteness of the snows. A pile of garments lay on one of the chairs by his side. They caught his

eye; a white wool skirt, a white wool sweater, a round fur cap. He bent and touched them and lifted them in his hands.

"Mrs. Devereux wore those the day she was hurt," the nurse told him, "and we've left them here because they seemed to be a sign of life—a sort of superstitious feeling, I'm afraid, but I couldn't bear to put them away."

And at last the man found his voice.

"Will you all go out, kindly? I want to be alone with my wife."

Searching, searching that icy face whose beauty he had always admired, but whose coldness had distanced him, searching her face, Devereux bent over the bed, a voiceless agony in his heart. •What if she should prove deaf to him? What if she would fail him? *Why, then the other woman would wander houseless, homeless, and this untempered temple would dissolve!*

He lifted the heavy hand and let it fall again.

"Paula," he whispered. "Paula."

He had never spoken to his wife in such a tone as this. He was so sure that she knew all he meant, all he knew, that he did not say aloud: "I know you now! Don't you remember the race? I won it, there's no one at the goal but me."

But he besought her to speak to him, using nothing but her name alone.

As she still slept her dreadful slumber a horrible fear seized him that he had been mistaken. He looked about the room, dreading now to see the other woman in the window, to see her take form out of the atmosphere and assume his wife's place, dreading and yet longing.

But there were no ghosts at St. Moritz, nothing but the gaining sunlight filled the room. Mrs. Devereux's clothes, with their touching, mute appeal, were more mortal, more human than the icy figure. Their appearance brought him back to the woman he had wildly loved for eight days. He lifted the garments with a cry and buried his face in them; and then, as their touch and reality brought him a certain consolation and assurance, he

bent again over his wife and kissed her; he had not touched her with his lips for years. On her forehead and her eyelids his kisses fell and then, with something like a sob, he kissed her lips.

A shock went through him, a vibrant, almost disembodying current of delight. He felt her sigh and breathe. She murmured a name and he heard it, and it was not another man's, but his own.

"Marc, Marc!"

She asked him a question in a voice which seemed to come from some land beyond the snow-peaks.

"Who won the race?"

The tears were on his face. Mrs. Devereux put her hand to her forehead, and as it fell it fell upon his neck:

"Marc, Marc!"

Devereux saw the return of her soul, and as her face took life again, as her eyes opened, as she breathed and smiled, he saw the face of the woman he loved and knew that it was his wife.

An hour later he went over to a man sitting in a big chair down-stairs in the hall.

"My wife is conscious, she's very weak, but there is no danger any longer."

The other man seemed profoundly moved. After a few seconds he said:

"There is, I expect, no message of any kind for me?"

And the happy Devereux pitied him. "No," he said slowly. "I'm inclined to think, Romaine, that she wanted *me* to come." And under his breath, almost making the greatest effort of his life, the husband added: "I love my wife, and I'm going to do my best to pull things together."

Romaine bit his lip. He made an inclination of his head, a sort of acknowledgment of defeat and a good-by. He turned on his heel, crossed over to the porter's desk, where he booked his seat for the diligence. And Devereux, eager, happy, triumphant, hurried back to the room where his love had brought the dead back and had warmed the snow-image to life.



IN SUCH A NIGHT

By Mrs. Wilson Woodrow



NE hot night in August, Westerveldt ran out from town to dine with his friends the Hattons, who lived all the year around at Wheaton, that delightful suburban town with its handsome houses set in emerald lawns and gay gardens, its wide streets shaded by great elm-trees and swept always by cool sea-breezes.

After dinner they had played bridge, and it was nearing twelve o'clock when the last rubber was completed. Then Westerveldt arose with an alacrity which spoke badly for his interest in the game, and with a barely stifled sigh of relief. As his partner no doubt realized, he had not felt in bridge humor throughout the evening. For many months he had been working under great pressure, the pressure of his own ideas, and he had been held continually in town; so now, noting the beauty of the night, he was conscious of a sudden and intense longing for the balm of its peace and beauty. Announcing his intention, then, to Hatton of strolling about a bit, he lighted a cigarette and wandered aimlessly through the grounds and out into the village street.

How the night restored his serenity worn by the rush and hurry of the day, of many arduous days! The silence was like a benediction of peace, and baring his head to the soft, light breeze, he walked on, unheeding the direction he took, unmindful of the passing moments, acquiescent to the spirit

in his feet which led him he knew not and cared not whither.

The harvest moon rode high in the sky, and in its light he could see that he had entered a broad avenue shaded by maples. The arching branches, thick-leaved, threw deep shadows over the street and sidewalk; the houses loomed dim, almost formless masses in the background, and now and again, as they were defined by a shaft of moonlight, Westerveldt could distinguish the gleam of marble in an Italian garden, or hear the faint musicalplash of a falling fountain.

He was completely under the spell of the night's enchantment now, and walked on as in a dream, heedless of time or place, when suddenly, he was roused sharply from his dreaming and came back to the mundane with every sense strained and acute, for he had been struck very fairly and squarely upon the side of the head. It was a stinging though not a stunning blow, for the object, whatever it was, was not a heavy one, although it had evidently been thrown with considerable force.

Almost in the moment it struck him, Westerveldt swung around and prepared to meet an assailant—two or three of them, perhaps—bent on hold-up; but there was no rush, no husky voice from the close-lying shadows bidding him look down the barrel of a pistol and lift his hands. The calm loveliness of the night remained unbroken. Then, as he gradually realized that his attitude of defense was unnecessary and that his fighting blood

was up for nothing, he laughed, unclenched his fists, and yielded himself to the stirrings of curiosity. Without entirely abandoning caution, he searched in his pocket for some matches, lighted one, and stooping down looked sharply about him for the missile. It lay at his feet, and still suspicious of an assailant who might take advantage of his bending attitude, he hastily picked it up. It was something tightly rolled, soft and silken to the touch, and seemed to contain a quantity of hard things like pebbles.

Westerveldt moved into a broad patch of moonlight, and after another quick glance of caution about him, proceeded to examine this object which had left its smarting remembrance on his cheek. As he turned it over carefully, it began to unroll, and as he drew it out to its full length, he gave an involuntary whistle of surprise; for it was a long stocking of violet silk, the small foot heavy with sharp-edged stones. Something new in weapons and be-speaking feminine cooperation and doubtless invention, he reflected.

Smiling cynically, he ran his hand into the depths of the stocking; but his fingers encountered something quite different from jagged pebbles, and with a tingling sense of excitement, an intuition which made his pulses beat, he drew up a handful of jewels—pins, pendants, rings of all kinds—rubies, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds. Barely taking time to examine them, he plunged his hand in again, eager to see what further treasures this purse of Fortunatus contained, and this time he drew forth a necklace, a single strand of enormous diamonds, sparkling in the moonlight like dew-drops.

Westerveldt gasped and then stood looking at his heaped handful of gleaming gems in an almost stupefied wonder. Was he really awake, or was this merely the iridescent and unsubstantial phase of a midsummer night's dream? He shook his shoulders impatiently. Oh, he was wide enough awake, and here were the jewels in his hand; but what did it mean? What was he to do with them?

He glanced helplessly up and down and all around. No one was in sight. The house before him—he could discern its outlines more distinctly now—was entirely dark, not a sound came from it, not even the faintest candle glimmer was anywhere visible. The whole place seemed enveloped in the dreamy atmosphere of a late summer night; and yet the stones—worth a king's ransom—had in all possibility been thrown from one of those black gaping windows; the manner in which they struck him indicated that they had been thrown from a height.

Still standing stock-still in his square of moonlight, his outstretched hand full of glittering stones, Westerveldt ran rapidly over the probabilities of the situation. Only two hypotheses appealed to his sense of reason. The first was, that some one behind one of those dark windows had thrown the jewels out in a moment of anger. But what, he asked himself, could have been the occasion for such an emotion? There had certainly been no struggle or he would have heard it; the night was too still for him not to have done so. The other hypothesis was that they had been thrown down by a burglar in a moment of panic, anticipating a discovery which did not occur. This was the more reasonable theory, Westerveldt felt.

He saw the whole picture. The burglar, in the act of looting the lady's safe, fancied he heard a noise. He dared not conceal his booty on his person, and glancing desperately about him, saw the lady's stocking—the first thing at hand. Hastily he thrust the jewels into it, rolled it into a compact ball, and threw it out of the window, trusting to luck to make his own stealthy escape, and gather up his eccentrically concealed treasure from the lawn in his flight.

Of course there was still another supposition, namely, that the burglar had arranged to drop his haul from the window to a confederate below, and that, in peering down from above, he had mistaken Westerveldt for his accomplice. In that case, the real confederate, who had probably been frightened

ened into temporary hiding, now merely awaited the assistance of his pal to set on Westerveldt and recover the loot.

Westerveldt smiled, and his face set in those grim lines which showed the force and determination which had been powerful factors in the success of his career. Anticipating thus the probable moves of the thieves, what should he do to checkmate them? No doubt the sensible and commendatory course would be to note carefully the exact situation of the house, and then taking advantage of a good start, make a dash for the Hattons, and assuming that he got there in safety, call at the robbed mansion the next morning and return to a distracted lady her purloined jewels. Just so! But could anything be more tame? And at any rate, would his story be fully credited? Would there not always cling to him the suspicion of being the real thief, the sinner overcome by remorse? No, all the sporting blood in him rebelled. This was adventure, genuine adventure, and he could not and would not relinquish the zest of seeing the thing through.

This decided, he rolled the stocking as tightly as he could about the ornaments and making a compact package of it thrust it in his trousers' pocket, then on second thoughts withdrew it and placed it in his breast pocket, tightly buttoning his coat over it. Then he drew back into the shade of the trees and waited. There he stood, listening keenly, his eyes glancing in all directions; but the moments dragged by and nothing happened. At last he moved again into the moonlight and looked at his watch. Half an hour had monotonously ticked by since he had begun his vigil. This savored of anything but adventure. He yawned and stretched his arms. An adjacent stone bench looked inviting and innocent, being set clear of shrubbery, and Westerveldt sank down with a sigh of relief.

He still realized the necessity of caution; but there was little to stimulate it, not even the rustle of a twig, the twitter of a sleepy bird. The windows

yawned as black and empty as ever. The moon sank slowly into a bed of fleecy clouds. A night of tender breezes and faint delicate flower scents, a night for high and tender romance, not sordid and brutal conflict.

"In such a night," murmured Westerveldt, "did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well?" His voice trailed. He turned his eyes upward and strove to discern the stars; but by some queer twist of vision, the Milky Way seemed to spread over the entire surface of the sky. He looked about him and beheld trees as men, walking. Odd, but of course an illusion of the moonlight. Forgetful for the moment of possible danger, his mind dwelt upon vast and illimitable themes, the problems of the ages, the philosophies of every race, the most aspiring thoughts of men. Contemplation absorbed him. For how long, he knew not; but suddenly, he sat upright with a jerk and looked dazedly about him. Why, where was he? What had happened?

Ah, he remembered now, and hastily clapped his hands to his breast. Yes, it was safe, thank fortune! And no thanks to him! But how different everything looked. There was a strange and solemn hush on the earth, while a pale and wonderful light, not of the moon, pulsated over the sky. Westerveldt gazed with surprise and delight, and then his glance fell upon a girl who stood quite near him, looking at him with puzzled eyes in which there were a touch of apprehension and a much larger measure of hope. White draperies trailed long on the ground, her dark hair fell back from her brow and lay in a heavy plait down her back, and her deep eyes were gray, a soft gray.

"What are you doing here?" she asked as Westerveldt rose hastily to his feet.

"I—I—" he began inadequately, and then burning with the consciousness of the rectitude, even nobility of his behavior, he collected his scattered faculties and grasped for what *savoir faire* he possessed. "My only excuse for my presence"—his tone was slightly wounded—"is that I am waiting

some stir and movement in the house yonder. I believe"—this very loftily—"that I have in my possession the property of some one within."

"Oh-h," the girl interrupted him, bent toward him, hands clasped. "Oh-h-h!" Her long sigh bespoke the most intense relief. "Have you—" She paused interrogatively, while the color came and went in her soft olive cheek.

"They—or rather it, containing they"—in his anxiety to reassure her, Westerveldt ignored grammar—"hit me on the head, and I have been here ever since, waiting to know why. And now that I am in a measure enlightened, let me return to you your property."

He drew the stocking from his pocket and handed it to her.

"Oh, thank you," with warmest gratitude, one hand outstretched to clutch it, the other holding the lace of her robe together, while the color flowed in waves over her face. "You see," in eager explanation, "I'm stopping with my friends here. We motored down most unexpectedly last night, and I felt a little uneasy and restless sleeping in a strange room. I always do. I put my necklace and rings and things in that," indicating the stocking, "and then I slipped it under my pillow and—" She stopped abruptly.

"And then in the night you fancied you heard a burglar, and you threw them out of the window," with a kindly smile of indulgent comprehension.

"No." She hung her head, and he reflected upon the charm of her blushes. "It wasn't that. Something, a sound or something, I do not know what, roused me a little in the night and I involuntarily slipped my hand under the pillow, with the instinct I suppose of protecting my property, and—I was only about one third awake, I suppose," her head drooping lower in shame-faced explanation, "and when I felt that little soft, cold, smooth bundle, I thought it was a mouse. Ugh!" She shivered at the remembrance. "So I threw it out of the window with all my might. Then feeling perfectly satisfied

I fell fast asleep again. Oh, you may laugh," with a petulant lifting of her chin. "but you don't know how I detest mice; and just because I do, I'm always pursued by them. Why, once"—her gray eyes very widely opened and her voice lowered impressively, as if recounting a tragedy—"I woke up in the night and felt one running right up my back. Fancy!" Her antipathy expressed itself in fresh shivers. "Just fancy feeling the little cold feet of the awful creature pattering up your back!"

Westerveldt speedily and tactfully repressed all signs of amusement. "It wouldn't be very agreeable, would it?" he admitted, with grave sympathy. "But go on, you hadn't finished. How did you finally discover the loss of your jewels?"

"Oh, yes. Well," taking up the broken thread of her narrative, "when I awoke again, it was to full consciousness and then I remembered the whole thing. At first, I thought it was all a dream, but alas, my remembrance was very soon confirmed by finding the jewels gone. So I threw on some things and ran down-stairs as fast as I could, hoping and praying that they had fallen on the lawn unnoticed and that I might find them without any difficulty. But I didn't, and I was beginning to despair and feel dreadfully until I saw you sitting here. It was barely daylight, you know, and I could just make out the figure of a man sitting on the bench. Of course I was more frightened than ever then, and my first impulse was to run. Then I realized from your relaxed attitude that you were asleep; your head was down on your outstretched arm, you know. So curiosity really saved the day, for I came nearer, and then," with a breath of relief, "I saw that you were the sort of person you are, and I began to feel more comfortable, and to hope that perhaps you might have found them. Oh, it does seem too good to be true that you did!"

"I am very glad that I did," he said simply and sincerely.

"Oh!" she exclaimed irrelevantly. "Mice!" with an expressive gesture. "If some one would only invent a trap with

a lethal chamber in it so that they wouldn't squeak when they're caught! It's dreadful when they squeak. That is the reason that they overrun me. I never can have traps about."

"Let me try and see what I can do," John Westerveldt suggested. "A mouse-trap with a lethal chamber!" He laughed boyishly. "I'll invent one and have some made just for you. I don't believe the rest of the world would bother with them."

"But could you," she cried, "invent things?"

"That is my business," he answered modestly.

"Really!" She seated herself on the stone bench and with a negligent little gesture invited him to a place beside her. "Oh, how delightful! To be able really to invent things seems to me the most interesting thing in the world. What else have you invented? What other things have you done?"

"Oh, a few things." He strove to speak of his achievements in the proper and conventional tones of bored indifference, but his profound interest in his work colored and warmed his voice. "The—the last thing is my aeroplane."

"An aeroplane! But surely not the wonderful new flying-machine that the papers are full of and that every one is talking about!" She was quite breathless in her excited interest.

He squirmed a little, flushed and nodded like a guilty but pleased schoolboy.

"Then you must really be—Westerveldt!" her eyes sparkling, and leaning forward the better to see him.

"Yes." He was deeply embarrassed now. "But look!" grasping at a change of topic. "By Jove! It is dawn!"

"Dawn!" she repeated, looking about her with awed and radiant eyes. "I do not remember ever seeing the dawn before. At least, not like this. How beautiful it is!"

"Is it not?" he murmured.

For a moment they gazed upon the fair new world, seeing it with new eyes, and then the girl dropped her contem-

plation of the wonders of light to become keenly conscious of her appearance. Hastily, she drew her floating draperies about her and, lifting her arms, mechanically tried to bind the heavy braid of her hair about her head. Naturally, as she had nothing where-with to hold it in place, it fell about her shoulders in a more loosened and picturesque disorder.

The growing light revealed her flushed perturbation, "I didn't take time to dress," she murmured. "I just threw on this *negligée* and hurried down."

"Naturally," he replied courteously.

"If I only had a hairpin! Why," with that little petulant lift in her voice, "if you can invent aeroplanes, can't you invent hairpins that will stay in?"

"I'll try that, too," he said meekly.

At that moment, some demon prompted him to look down and he caught a glimpse of her small bare feet thrust hastily into slippers. He averted his eyes immediately; but not before she had followed his glance. For a dreadful second he thought she was going to fly without one parting word; but she reconsidered this very evident intention, and rose rather grandly to her full height, determined to carry off the situation with what dignity she could command. But before she could utter the brief and conventional words which should thank and dismiss him, the whistle of a train shrilled through the calm of the early morning.

"Good gracious! That must be my train." Westerveldt pulled his watch from his pocket. "It is, and I must catch it. I haven't even time to go back to the Hattons for my things; I'll wire Joe to bring them in with him on a later train," thinking aloud. "I've got to run."

"And I, too, must run," she cried. "The sun is up. The house will be opened in a few minutes. Oh, I must fly; but first let me thank you from my heart." She smiled sweetly into his eyes as he took her outstretched hand.

"But you have nothing to thank me for," he insisted. "It is I—I who must thank you. And I mean to see you soon—soon. Good-by."

He sprinted across the lawn and down the wide tree-bordered street to the station, where a great black engine puffed and panted, its wheels already beginning their slow preliminary revolutions. Westerveldt had a bare moment to jump aboard, and throw himself breathlessly into a seat, thanking the fates that he had worn his light overcoat when he had strolled unwittingly into adventure-land the night before, as it served in a measure to conceal his evening clothes.

He settled himself comfortably and drew his hat over his closed eyes, but not to sleep. No, his action was a mere indication of a desire on his part to shut out from view the sordid, frowsy humanity crowding the seats, and to vision again the mystery of the night and the sparkle and freshness of the dawn, which had met and mingled and personified themselves in a lovely girl with sweet, dark-lashed gray eyes and a wilful mouth. But—he sat bolt upright with a suddenness which caused his fellow-travelers to lift their eyes and stare at him curiously. His paradise of dreaming had been invaded by the serpent; not of doubt, this time, but of remembrance. Idiot that he was! He took occasion here to add mental and picturesque adjectives to the bare noun, idiot, as the full measure of his stupidity burst upon him, for he did not even know her name, had not even made the least attempt to learn it. His resentment against himself flamed into an erupting Vesuvius of objurgation.

But the inherent optimism of his nature gradually asserted itself. Not for long did Westerveldt ever dwell in gloom. Being an inventor, a successful one at that, who had succeeded in convincing the world of the practicality of a fair number of his ideas, he was a young man of infinite resource, and he had sufficient faith in himself to feel sure that he would, in one way or another, have no difficulty in gaining all the information he desired.

For one thing, he knew the house where she had tarried for a night. Then he would enlist the Hattons in his service. Mrs. Hatton was probably on

calling terms with the people who dwelt in the big gray mansion, or if not, she would at least know who they were, and either she or Joe should get this dearest of girls' name for him. Simple. Quite.

Arriving in town, he had just time to change his clothes, snatch a few mouthfuls of breakfast and get downtown in time to meet some members of a syndicate who were on the verge of financially interesting themselves in his aeroplane. For several days he was in close conference with them, varied by frequent trial trips in his machine. It needed more or less adjustment, and one or two repairs, and consequently over a week passed before he again had on his evening clothes. Probably he wouldn't have considered donning them then, so little inclined was he for social duties, if he had not been invited to dine at the home of one of his interested if not interesting capitalists.

Just before leaving his apartment, he slipped his keys into his trousers' pocket, and was startled to hear a faint metallic rattle as they struck some object already there. He thrust his hand down to discover what it was, and his heart stood still, for his fingers closed about a ring. Slowly, reluctantly, with sickening forebodings, he drew it out. It was an enormous ruby set in dull gold, easily the gem of the whole silk-stockings collection as he remembered it. As he turned it in his fingers, it caught the light from the hall-lamp and gave back a thousand reflections.

But the sparkle of it, the gleam of its rich, wine-red beauty aroused no pleasure in him. He felt himself turn cold as he looked at it. What would she, what could she think of him? The answer was obvious; she could think but one thing. The certainty of her inevitable conclusion made him feel the desperate need of explanations. He shuddered to think of the time that had elapsed since the night he had met her, the night in which he had restored her jewels and walked off with the pick of the lot in his pocket.

Under the goad of these reflections, he resolved on immediate action. The

thought of sitting through a long dinner with a vista of bridge afterward was more than he could think of. It did not even give him a qualm, in fact, it was a decided lift to his spirit to commit the unpardonable social sin of backing out of a dinner at the last moment; and so feverish were his activities that it was but the work of a few minutes to send a telegram to his hostess, change his clothes, take a "taxi" to the station, and there, after a few impatient, restless moments, board the first train for Wheaton.

On the way down he planned his next moves. First, he would go to the Hattons, tell them the whole story, get their point of view, request their advice, perhaps their assistance in the matter of speedily extricating himself from his present uncomfortable position. But when he finally stepped off the train and took his way up the quiet village street, his resolution wavered, and after hesitating a moment or two, he turned into the avenue he remembered so well. But although his heart beat high as one daring plan after another suggested itself, it sank immeasurably as he reached the house. That stood amid its brilliantly lighted neighbors as forbidding as dark as the night itself, and as Westerveldt walked up the steps of the porch, he saw that all of the lower windows were boarded up.

Having ventured so far, however, he was not to be deterred from venturing farther. Again and again he pressed the bell, until at last, meeting no response, and convinced that the house was empty, he was about to turn away, when heavy footsteps echoed through the hall. Then innumerable bolts and bars were slowly withdrawn, and there stood before him a charwoman holding in one hand a candle which illuminated her incredibly stupid and doughlike face. Whatever her nationality, it was evident that she understood no English, for after listening a few moments to Westerveldt's often-repeated, almost pathetic, requests to know the whereabouts of the family, she merely shook her head, until at last, her patience apparently exhausted, she slammed the

door violently and without warning in his face.

It was a very dejected young man who presented himself ten minutes later at the Hattons. Fortunately, they were alone and both professed themselves delighted to see him; but their consternation at his worn and haggard appearance was evident, and he found himself under the necessity of giving such full and detailed answers to their questions as to how he had been spending his time, and how many hours a day and night he had been working, that it was some moments before he could touch upon the subject uppermost in his thoughts.

It was a tremendous relief when he could at last take advantage of a lull in the tide of friendly solicitude to make a clean breast of the whole matter—to talk it out, even if his story elicited more amusement than the almost tragic sympathy which he felt it merited; but when he reached the present time and described his recent visit to the black and lonely house, his disappointment and dejection were so manifestly keen that the Hattons began to take his misery more seriously.

"You must mean the Weatherby place," said Joe Hatton, knocking the ashes from his cigar. "That has been closed for a week or two, hasn't it, Alice?"

"Yes, the whole family have gone to Egypt, South Africa, or somewhere for the winter. They sailed last Saturday."

Westerveldt groaned. Then a ray of hope brightened his eyes. "I can get their address and cable them."

Mrs. Hatton shook her head. "I doubt if any one here knows it. You see, they only bought that place last spring, and they've had a constant succession of visitors, and of course, have been so completely occupied with them that very few people here have met them."

"But of course, there is, there must be some one from whom I can find out where they are over there," contended Westerveldt obstinately. "They haven't vanished and left an untenanted house on the hands of a caretaker. Why, man

alive!" to Hatton. "Don't you see that I've got to get a cable to them and learn that girl's address?"

"But how will they know whom you mean," asked Mrs. Hatton, with simple feminine practicality, "since you haven't the faintest idea of her name?"

This was staggering. Westerveldt grew rather white. "I could describe her so that they would know at once whom I meant," he insisted eagerly. "She was dark, rather dark and tall—I think she was tall and—lovely." His voice faltered as if even he realized the inadequacy of this description.

Mrs. Hatton gave a tiny shrug of the shoulders. "Oh, they had no end of tall, dark, pretty girls here all summer, interspersed with tall, light, pretty ones. Mrs. Weatherby was married when she was just out of college and she must have had her whole class here off and on." She paused and reflected. "I do remember one especially attractive dark girl who was here just for a short time, a day or two. They said that she was a great heiress, an orphan, and had a wonderful collection of jewels inherited from her mother."

Westerveldt's loosely clasped hands hung between his knees, his eyes were on the rug at his feet. At her words, his head sank a little lower. Presently, he lifted it and brushed back the hair from his brow with an impatient gesture.

"What am I going to do?" he cried. "You both knock everything I suggest instead of giving a little helpful advice. Great Heavens! Think of my position! What am I in her eyes but a thief—just a common thief, who took occasion to carefully examine her jewels, select the best, and return the others to her with grandiloquent virtue? Ugh! And she knows who I am. I told her my name."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Hatton consolingly, "she'll think you stole that, too."

"She can't," he replied gloomily. "My mug has been in all the papers and magazines lately, and she's probably seen it. She could hardly help doing so. And think of her pluck! She

hasn't shown me up, handed me over to the police, as she should have done. Neither has she made any quiet efforts to recover her property. She probably thinks I'm one of those crazy inventors she's read about who burn all the furniture up and pawn the last loaf of bread in the house in order that they may perfect their wonderful invention. She was willing to lose a valuable ruby, in order to assist struggling genius minus a moral sense." He bent his head upon his arm and shuddered.

Mrs. Hatton endeavored to console him by reiterating her belief that there was nothing to do but wait, absolutely nothing; and Joe, who had managed to extract a wealth of humor from the situation, crowned his offenses by urging Westerveldt, with all that joviality we bring to bear upon the troubles of our friends, to cheer up, accompanying this advice with a far too hearty slap between the shoulders.

Then Westerveldt arose with what dignity and lightness of demeanor he could summon, insisted upon taking the eleven o'clock train to town instead of remaining the night with his friends.

During the ensuing winter, he embarked seriously upon a search for a lost and lovely girl. It was the absorbing occupation of his leisure hours, and became a pursuit in itself, almost a mission. He went out socially more, far more than he had ever done before. He haunted the places where women do congregate. He even made his way into department stores and bonbon shops. He attended matinées. Almost he invaded the beauty-parlors. He put veiled advertisements in the newspapers, but no answers came, and although he saw her a thousand times, he never saw her. Although she was always just ahead of him and he hastened his steps to overtake her, he never met her. And during his eternal quest, instead of being buoyed up by hope, he was haunted by pessimistic fears that she was not in this country. He was convinced that she had gone abroad with the Weatherbys, and he carefully read all the newspaper descriptions of foreign fêtes in which

Americans participated, expecting always to see some description of her *beaux yeux* and her wonderful jewels.

The winter dragged by, but he had not chanced upon even the faintest clue. His "lost Lenore" seemed more hopelessly lost than ever.

And then in February, he had to go out to Chicago on business, and there, late one afternoon, on Michigan Avenue, he met her. It was a cold, raw day. The lake tossed gray and angry beyond the long lines of moving carriages and rolled out to an equally gray and bleak horizon. Westerveldt saw her first, some distance away, before she saw him; and this time there were no moments of hope, or half conviction. From the moment his eyes fell upon her he knew positively and irrevocably that it was she, and his heart throbbed with the joy that the mere sight of her gave him. Who could mistake her? That sweet, petulant mouth, the individual way her hair fell in great sweeping waves over her temples, those dark-lashed, direct gray eyes.

But, and he noted this with a pang, she looked a little thinner, paler than she had that summer morning of their one meeting, and odd as it was, even to his untutored eyes, she was shabby, obviously, unmistakably shabby.

Then she lifted her eyes and saw him, and over the delicate oval of her face—oh, a little thinner and surely more finely drawn than in the summer—there flashed a color and a light.

Their steps hastened, almost ran, then they stopped abruptly.

"It is you!" he cried.

"It is really you!" she sighed, and the exclamations were simultaneous.

Then he turned, and slowly, very slowly, they walked on together.

"How—how I have searched for you!" he stammered.

"For me?" tremulously. "Why?"

"Oh, surely you know why," he murmured.

She turned a rosier red. "Because—because—"

"Because I could not bear to have you think such things of me. All these months you must have thought of me

as a thief, condemned me as a thief; but that was not the only reason. There was—there is another, deeper, more vital—"

"A thief!" horror and surprise in her tone, her eyes. "A thief! How could I think that after that night in Wheaton? Why should I have thought such a thing?"

"Why shouldn't you?" he said bitterly. "What else could you have thought of me when I turned over to you all your jewels with the exception of what was probably of the greatest value among them—a magnificent pigeon's-blood ruby?"

She looked up at him quickly, and he thought a little strangely, through her long, dark lashes, and then those upcurled lashes fell again on her rose-stained cheeks.

"But a thief!" in tender reproof. "Why, I only thought, I only thought you had kept it as a souvenir of that night."

"Blessed are the pure in heart!" He almost shouted it. A souvenir! The lovely innocence of the thought—that he had kept a ring of tremendous value as a souvenir!

"Just imagine," he said, "the difficulties of my search for you! I did not, do not now, even know your name."

"Lenore," she answered. "Lenore Hastings."

"Not really!" he cried. "'My lost Le—'

"Don't say it!" quickly.

"My found Lenore," he supplemented.

Was it strange that she should blush again? At any rate it was not surprising, for really she blushed beautifully.

"But what have you been doing since we met?" hastily retreating to less dangerous ground. "Have you invented the mouse-trap with the lethal chamber, and the hairpins that will stay in? The newspapers tell how far and fast you have gone with your air-ships, but they don't say anything about the other things."

"Never mind," he said. "You shall

have them. The newspapers never deal with the most important topics. But wait!" He drew from his pocket a small leather case. "I invented the lock on this, at any rate. It has never left me, for I did not know what minute I might meet you, you see."

He opened it and drew out the ruby. The pale February sun struggled through the clouds and shimmered over the lake and avenue, and the ring caught its fugitive gleams and held them in its sparkling facets. But Lenore shrank and viewed it with distaste.

"Horrid thing! Think"—again she lifted her sweet eyes to his—"of all the self-reproach and anxiety it has caused you!" She put out a disdainful thumb and finger and lifted the ring from its bed. "There, you trouble-maker! I never want to see you again." With a sweeping gesture, she threw it far out toward the lake.

"Good Heavens!" He turned a face of pale consternation upon her, a horrible fear that she had a mania for throw-

ing away jewels chilling his blood. "You have thrown away a fortune." He made as if to dash among the crowding vehicles.

"But it is not!" she cried earnestly. "Believe me, it is not. Do you not know? But of course you cannot. I am a poor struggling little actress, no heiress with a collection of jewels, I assure you. I had a good position last summer—I have none at all now—and in my part I had to wear a lot of jewels. Mrs. Weatherby is a classmate of mine, and she stopped at the theater one night last summer and insisted on my going down to Wheaton in her motor to spend the night, and she literally carried me off in costume, insisting that she would supply all necessities after I got there. But the jewels, the whole lot of them were paste. The whole lot of them!" vehemently.

"Oh, no!" He shook his head with a tremulous sigh of relief. "Not the whole lot of them. One jewel was real, and I want her to have and to hold forever."



WHEN AS A LAD

WHEN, as a lad, at break of day
I watched the fishers sail away,
My thoughts, like flocking birds, would follow
Across the curving sky's blue hollow,
And on and on—
Into the very heart of dawn!

For long I searched the world! Ah, me!
I searched the sky, I searched the sea,
With much of useless grief and ruing
Those wingéd thoughts of mine pursuing—
So dear were they,
So lovely and so far away!

I seek them still and always will
Until my laggard heart is still,
And I am free to follow, follow,
Across the curving sky's blue hollow,
Those thoughts too fleet
For any save the soul's swift feet!

ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY.



The SISTER OF STEEL

By
Will Levington Comfort



JORDAN sat in his office and stared at the wall as many an embryo lawyer has done before—with hate wide and deep in his heart. The city rumbled up to his window and the heat of July came in with the sounds. He was on the last hundred dollars of his modest patrimony, and the first client was not yet in sight. He had practised law—in dreams—for six months.

It had seemed six years since he left college and the honors and glory thereof. The way had been opened to him then to start in the office of a successful lawyer, but Jordan said: "No, thank you!" to the opportunity. He was minded then to fight it out on his own hook. He knew that men of the world do not bring their problems to the fresh grist of future greats which the colleges turn loose twice a year, but he knew that he was Jordan who could fight and wait and keep fit on seventy-five cents a day.

It was one o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday when he jammed his desk closed, locked his office door, and made his way down to the street. His impulse had come from the instinct of self-preservation. He had felt that his brain would crack if he waited another hour in the den of agony his office had come to be. Five hours later he was sitting at the edge of a little inland lake, thirty-

five miles from the city, having walked a good quarter of the distance.

He was tired from his shoulders down, but his brain was in a blessed state of peace. The sun was behind him; and a two-pound bass, all jeweled in the glow, leaped clear from the water, a stone's throw out. This and the silence and the smell of the woods and the lake brought back memories thrilling and healing; besides, getting one's feet in a lake of cool water has a fine sedative influence for an office-bound man.

He wondered why he happened to think that moment of Steve Bent—a good college friend who had specialized in cement chemistry, and who had literally forced all with whom he came in contact, especially Jordan, to absorb cement enthusiasm and facts. It came suddenly to Jordan that Steve Bent was recalled because the white sludgy bottom in which his toes were buried had the look of calcareous mud. Until dusk, the city man walked around the lake. The shore and the bottom as far into the water as he could see were practically a solid marl-bed. Just then a passenger-train whistled for the town, and went crashing and glinting by through the trees an eighth of a mile away.

His brain knew nothing now, but a growing dream of cement. Here was marl, fortunes of marl; and yonder was the main line which would shoot down a spur to the edge of the lake and carry the finished product to the impatient

cities. Right here where he was sitting at the edge of the lake, a huge cement-mill of brick and iron would shortly be smoking. It should have a dozen white-hot rotaries and slurry-pits, as big as tennis-courts. A pair of dredges would squeak and groan with riches of raw material out in the lake, and Steve Bent would be the high priest of the laboratory.

All thoughts were put to flight at this juncture by the slow measured creak of rowlocks and the soft humming of a woman's voice. Jordan sat perfectly still in the dusk. The boat was coming his way and skirting the shore. It contained a young woman—alone.

Had the light been perfect, Jordan could not have told whether the waist she wore was of cambric or calico, but of its effectiveness he could attest with zeal. It was open at the throat and her head was bare. The manner in which she held her head made the watcher think of certain ancient and classical verses. The face showed wondrously pure and fair in the failing light; and her song was certainly a sensation both in music and poetry, having to do with a maiden who stood upon the shore, with eyes straining overseas for a lover long overdue.

She was gone. Jordan rubbed his eyes for a moment and inquired unto himself if it were not all an enchantment—the lake, the dream of cement, and the embodiment of sweetness and harmony now sank in darkness and silence.

"I shall make the town," he muttered, "and eat a quarter's worth of cheese, sausage, soda crackers, and harvest apples—if I don't wake up in that oven of irony before I get there."

He referred to his office. Another name he had for it was "the waiting-room."

As he restored himself in a town restaurant, Jordan learned from the proprietor that the lake referred to was familiarly and affectionately known as "Maude"; that fishing was prime; that Maude lay upon the property of old Lem Snell, who likewise owned the grove between the shore and the rail-

road, besides operating a bank and other interests in town. In general, Snell was said to be too mean to fatten his pigs.

Jordan called upon him that night, and in the dim lamp-lit parlor, he regarded the face of a man who had rubbed and pared and dreamed dollars for seventy years. Upon the wall, to the right of the organ, was a picture—framed in crape—of a helpmeet who had fallen in harness, a tired, pained sufferer. Jordan explained that he wanted an option on the lake property, including a thousand-foot strip of the grove running back to the railroad. The glint of greed was bright as lamp-light in the old man's eyes. He wanted to sell the lake which had stood in the way of hay and oats these many years. The young man allowed him to think that the property was wanted for a summer resort.

"I'll give a thirty-day option for a hundred dollars," said Snell.

"And what is your lowest figure for the property."

"Thirty-five hundred."

"Thanks. I'll have the option money here early in the week. In the meantime our verbal agreement holds—"

Jordan halted. A woman had entered the sitting-room to turn up the hanging-lamp. Through the open doorway, the visitor saw the up-turned profile. It was the twilight vision—the woman who had sung as she rowed.

"Good as the wheat," the old man was saying.

Jordan left his card and departed. It had been a great day, giving him rest and courage, a dream of success and a tangible outline of toil. More than all, it had given him a romance which was sheer star-energy. It was not until Monday morning that he located Steve Bent, who, according to Jordan's plan, was to lend one-half of the option hundred, on the strength of a position as chemist in the hypothetical cement plant on the verge of Maude.

"I'll raise fifty somewhere," said the enthusiast, who was merely existing as a clerk until he could strike a cement

opening. "I've got fifty in platinum crucibles."

"Save them, if possible," said Jordan. "We'll need 'em in our mill, but don't fail. I'm filling out the hundred with my grub-stake."

Bent promised to have the money in the other's office by noon the following day, Tuesday. Jordan was waiting for him about eleven-forty-five, when the most unforeseen event in current history took place. Not only did he get a client, but in no less a person than the lady of the lake. Adorably tremulous, she explained that there was a little matter concerning which she had intended to see a village lawyer, but as Mr. Jordan had left his card, and she had to come to the city anyway—

The fact was that her father, lately deceased, had left her property, of five thousand dollars in value, in the hands of Lemuel Snell, who provided a home for her. The young woman was unhappy with her uncle and desired to live in the city. Snell, while not actually refusing a settlement, had put obstacles in the way repeatedly.

Jordan promised that he would close the matter promptly to her satisfaction, provided that no complication arose.

"And then there is another matter," she essayed, wholly bewitching in her dismay. "You seemed so earnest and straightforward—about the option—that I could not see you done out of it. That is if you still want it."

Jordan's heart leaped from diaphragm to larynx. "You don't mean to say, Miss Gibson, that Snell is bucking on that?"

"I'm afraid so—since there was no written agreement."

"But there was a witness," Jordan said hastily, and just as hastily the ice closed over him again. Because a girl was lovely and generous to him, it was no reason why she should be drawn into a sphere of sordid chicanery.

"You see," the lady resumed, "he heard that you had been all over the shore for hours Saturday, and he thinks you found oil or coal, and he means to hold for a larger price."

"Miss Gibson, if it comes to a show-

down," Jordan said hoarsely, "may I mention to old man Snell that there was a witness?"

"Yes—if you must."

"Miss Gibson," the lawyer went on, bending toward her, "I am a very poor young man, only six months out of college, and my clients have been fewer so far than orchids in a corn-field, but I want to say that my services are yours until futurity. I want to say that if there is any game in the Jordan breed—and I think there's some—I'm going to win!"

At this interesting juncture the door banged open, and Bent came in with the money and fled.

Armed with the old man's intention, Jordan went after him briskly that afternoon. He had the satisfaction of perceiving that he rather disconcerted the banker at the onset.

"I've reconsidered," Snell said. "A month is a long time, and a hundred dollars ain't much."

"Do I understand," Jordan inquired frostily, "that you propose to break your word—you a banker?"

"I don't recollect any particular word. We only sort of footed up a temporary arrangement."

"Say, look here, Banker Snell," Jordan said, and his voice was for the bystanders, "do you think that I, a lawyer, entrusted with other people's money, would take chances on a verbal agreement without a witness—with the country-town sort, the retired-farmer sort? Why, for what you have just said, I could hurt your credit."

They were standing in front of the hotel. There was a carrying quality to the young man's voice. Snell remembered that his niece was in the sitting-room, that she was in the city this forenoon, and that of late he had come almost to open quarrel with her about her money. Snell was called. He had his bank to protect. He felt—and only a bred countryman can tremble under such a menace—that he was arraigned against some mysterious colossus of metropolitan craft. He could be adamant in foreclosures, but he had held the upper hand too long on the sure

thing to be reenforced for the far chances. There was little of mirth or prettiness in his laugh as he said:

"I was just tryin' to find out what kind of stuff you city fellers are made of."

Jordan exhumed from his innermost being a superlative blessing for the lady, and rode back to town with the preliminary closed and a vow to storm the metropolis for fifteen thousand dollars within thirty days. The fact that he had less than ten dollars in the world, and was not good at borrowing, did not strike down this high-handed hope; nor did the next morning, a rainy Monday, wreck the fair fabric of it. He rejoiced that his office-rent was paid, even though he had to give up his boarding-house. Moreover, Jordan had the audacity to call on Gredstone first.

Gredstone was one of the grimdest and grittiest of the human-dollar monuments.

"If I can make a dent in this gold dredge," the young man reasoned, "I can wring the very soul of Capital."

At eleven that morning he was shown into an office plain unto pain, and seated before a gray little man with a face inscrutable as a cliff. Jordan told what he had and what he wanted, without bringing forth any more response than if he had talked to a mausoleum. Indeed, it was not until he had finished with a fine flourish of rhetoric—to the effect that while this is undoubtedly the age of Steel, at the same time Steel has a twin-sister, Cement—that he elicited the two words:

"Has she?"

Jordan's commercial education was crowded into that month, each phase of it a roweling lesson. Forced culture leaves a reaction. In the present case, it was a species of brain-fag almost suicidal. He was a young man and strong, but not mature enough to conserve his force, or to tolerate the poison of repeated defeats.

There remained five days of the option, and no hope. It seems almost indecent in this age to state that Jordan had been mostly hungry in the past two weeks and had slept in his office-chair.

He felt that men on the street and in the elevator had regarded him querulously as he sought his office that fifth day from the last. It was an afternoon of great heat. He was alone at last; much of his mind was in a state of chaos. He sensed each organ of his body; felt, too, the vibrations of the office building and the drum of the dynamos in the basement. His head was sunk forward upon the desk, his fingers pressed tightly against his scalp, which was numbed. The office door was open for the passage of the dry, hot air.

Thus he had lain for an hour when the lady of the lake found him. Her first impulse was to turn back into the hall, but some terrible need of his impressed her instinctively and she uttered his name. Jordan jerked up his head with the violence of a nerve-tormented creature, and the woman saw a face that hurt her to the heart. It was a moment of embarrassment to them both. The man was incoherent for a moment.

"Oh, I am so sorry to have startled you," she exclaimed, reading the lines of suffering upon his face. "I came to ask you how you were faring with the option."

He laughed dismally. "I'm afraid, Miss Gibson, that I could not sell gold bullion at a twenty per cent. discount for cash."

"Please don't despair," she said earnestly. "You have some days left. By the way, I wish to pay you for the letter you wrote to my uncle. It did the work, and I am living here in the city."

"Don't humiliate me with the thought of money for that," he said strangely. "If I wrote a hundred letters I could not square accounts with you."

The words sounded as if they had been chopped out one by one through brute force. It is likely that she guessed only a tithe of what he had to fight against to utter those words, but it was enough to quicken her intuitions—and she won her way.

Jordan, alone once more, stared at the twenty-dollar bill on his desk and at a card, which bore her city address

—so that he might tell her the good or ill word of the deal. And then, Jordan, the battered, did a strange thing, one that is seldom in the province of man. He wept.

Presently he went out for food, not that he greatly craved it—he was too ill for that—but because the self-preservation instinct forced the act. Then he slept ten hours—in a bed, awaking as he had sunk to sleep, murmuring the word, "Angel." Only one thought for the day's work appeared in his mind—to go back to Gredstone. This was as clear as if certain inner forces had worked it out while he slept.

Still, the work of dressing was a mountain, and the thought of returning to the office of the old magnate, terrible as meeting a dragon. Nothing but the furious needs of the hour, or rather of the last four days, could have overcome the utter lassitude of his entire being.

As before, Gredstone admitted him without formality. Jordan felt the numbness steal back into his scalp as the little gray eyes fastened upon him. Only a moment he faltered before reason and valor adorned his speech. He put in a personal touch this time, not of his hunger, but of his struggle for capital, and he dipped into the art of brevity to accentuate the whole. Again he talked to a rock until the end, when the financier said:

"Young man, if you let three weeks of this world of ours half kill you, how do you expect to make a career?"

The esoteric truth was challenged here, and Jordan responded: "I spent just about my last dollar, sir, for the option. My law practise hasn't begun to pay. If I lose—it isn't altogether a matter of dollars—but I lose the chance of sticking to my profession."

"Be here at eleven o'clock day after to-morrow. Good morning," said Gredstone.

Day after to-morrow—the next to last day! Jordan was drifting in the brimming currents of the street, clutching his first hope. He had not the strength to lay new wires, but cast his all with Gredstone. The thought came

to him at length that if Gredstone failed him, he would lose not only his chance of sticking to his profession, but his heaven-dear romance. His heart beat wildly. How he hungered for her voice in his pain—her hand upon his forehead to still the disorder within. It was another day of almost unparalleled heat and he sought the lake of his fortune. Maude soothed him with her cooling breath as he drowsed the afternoon away beneath the elms and beeches of her shore.

In the dusk he went to the little town hotel for supper, and had a brush with old man Snell, who inquired ironically if his capitalists had decided to buy the lake. The question and the look upon the tight white old face ground harshly. In the evening he learned that Gredstone was well known in the vicinity; in fact, that he had a summer place on Crooked Lake five miles above. It was then that the thought came to rend his ebbing vitality that the two old men were against him—that Gredstone had an arrangement with Snell to use up the last days of the option. The little town revolted him. That night and the next day in the city formed a long-drawn horror. The numbness was constant in his scalp.

At the stipulated hour Jordan found that he was to tell his story at a meeting of directors of one of Gredstone's companies. He sat in a corner of the darkened room, trying not to appear rigid; trying to keep his lip from quivering, his throat from dryness, and his brain from wandering. The faces of the men gathering were calm, immobile; they had voices but told nothing. In a half-hour he would know!

The old man entered, sat down at the head of the table, and the meeting was called.

His own part is all a blank. He talked and he ceased talking; he was shown into an anteroom to await the decision. It was not long in coming. A young financier appeared and announced, not without kindness, that, as a company, the directors had decided against Maude mari. Jordan replied

with courtesy, then swooned utterly. He recovered consciousness in Gredstone's inner office, in a huge leathern chair quite foreign to the place.

The old man looked up from his desk with the drawled inquiry:

"Look here, young person, do you feel strong enough to stand a little more punishment?"

Jordan nodded vaguely at the gray expressionless face, and the millionaire went on:

"When I was your age; I was dressing pork for six dollars a week. So far as I can see, you are sweating blood because you can't clear eleven thousand four hundred dollars in four weeks. You have nerve, but do you realize that you are not in Bradstreet; that you haven't lost the college smell; that you have been trying to bluff old war-horses in gold armor; that you have been cluttering up the offices of busy men?"

Gredstone leisurely took a chew of fine-cut and resumed: "Now, there is marl in Maude—nearly ninety-three per cent. calcium carbonate. I've had an expert there. Even old Lem Snell knows now why you wanted the lake. He offered to sell to my agent for eleven thousand—you want fifteen. You can buy from Snell to-day or to-morrow, according to the option, for thirty-five hundred. I'll give you an even ten thousand to buy it with—and you can keep the change. I didn't press the matter to the directors, because—well, it's a little matter, and I can handle it alone."

The old man paused to make a cuspidor ring, and then added wickedly: "Don't think I care anything about you because I do this. I don't. You make me nervous. But I've got an outstanding grudge of twenty years against old Lem Snell, and forcing him to sell Maude for thirty-five hundred will just about pay it off. The fact is"—he chortled impishly—"I think it will make him take to his bed for a spell. Why, say, Snell is a meander man than I am! Shall I write a check for ten, boy?"

"Just one thing," Jordan said intensely. "A man named Steve Bent is to be chemist at the cement plant when it is ready for action. He is a cement genius and he furnished half the option money."

"A man named Steve Bent will have to make good to stay in my plant," said Gredstone.

"That's all that Steve needs—a chance," said Jordan.

The old man wrote out the check.

"And now," said he, "I'll send a man out with you to buy Maude. There'll be a fight, and you don't look as if you could whip one of old Lem's hind-quarters to-day. About four o'clock I'll be out to remind old Lem that we're square again."

That night a sorrowful figure, lying upon a couch in Steve Bent's rooms, demanded to be taken to a certain lady. Instead, the troubled Steve took his friend to a hospital, where it was learned that sleeplessness, a neglected stomach, the heat, and weeks of furious expenditure of mental force had combined to bring on a run of fever. For several days Jordan had nothing to do with the world's events. His was a plane of soft singing and twilight visions.

When, one midday, he came back suddenly to the fleshy garb of things, the sweet reality of all his dreams became strangely tremulous, and he began fumbling with hat-pins.

"Oh, won't you stay?" Jordan pleaded faintly, but with a facility of thought, as if he were but finishing in words a sentence that had been begun in the subtler regions. "Oh, won't you stay? Why, I never dreamed that there was anything so wonderful in the world! If you only knew how dear, how wonderful you are to me—you would stay—"

Presently a nurse halted in the doorway with a bowl of broth. For a moment she stood there; then turned back quietly into the corridor. So far as her ministrations of broth were concerned, the nurse perceived that for the time the patient was a hopeless case.

AROUND THE BRIDGE TABLE

*By Arthur
Loring Bruce*



ANY stories are told, some of them doubtless apocryphal, about games of bridge played by ladies under peculiar circumstances.

In a private New York hospital there were four ladies who loved the game devotedly, but were all of them unfortunately confined to their beds. Every morning their beds were arranged two on one side of the room and two on the other. Partners were chosen, and four packs of cards and four lap-boards were produced. A nurse dealt the cards, one to each player on her particular board. After the make, the dummy was spread out in duplicate on each board, and the ladies, as it was their turn to play, feebly called their cards. In this rather awkward way the mornings were made to pass very happily.

In Scotland an English gentleman had a grouse moor. The shooting was usually about six miles from the house, and every noon four or five ladies would bundle themselves into a bus and drive to the coverts, in order to lunch with the sportsmen. A folding-table was carried along as well as some cards and score-pads, and bridge agreeably whiled the time away until the beaters and gentlemen came into view.

At the State Insane Asylum at Poughkeepsie bridge is often played, and some of the female patients are, I am told, extremely proficient at the game. I am assured, however, that most of these ladies have an exaggerated idea of their skill, an unhappy de-

lusion shared by millions of their more fortunate sisters without the walls of insane pavilions,

But the most extraordinary feminine instance of bridge under high pressure was the case of Mrs. James Thompson, of Fourth Avenue, Detroit. This little anecdote found its way into the Detroit papers, and I am glad to quote it, as it shows that women sometimes possess, under trying circumstances, a truly admirable philosophical spirit as well as a lively interest in bridge.

Mrs. Thompson had gone, one winter evening, to visit a neighbor and play a friendly rubber or two. The match was a close one, and she was struggling valiantly to pull out the game with a very difficult no-trumper, when some neighbors rushed in, and, in a state of almost frenetical excitement, announced to Mrs. Thompson that her house was on fire and would soon be beyond all hope of saving. The guests flew to the windows and saw that the house was already a pillar of flame. Mrs. Thompson seemed a trifle saddened by the catastrophe which had befallen her, but quite as much vexed by the untimely interruption to the game. She soon sat down again at the table and remarked, as though nettled by the intrusion of the newcomers: "Come on; let's finish."

At this point a reporter from a local paper was admitted, and asked Mrs. Thompson what she had to say about the conflagration.

"I don't know anything about it," she said a little testily. "The house is on fire as you can plainly see, but we are luckily on the outside, and that is all there is to it."

With this she triumphantly played the queen of diamonds, and was soon completely under the spell of the game again.

Although this is an extreme instance of women's devotion to the game, I must admit that I am surprised to see what a firm hold the game has taken on them, both on this side of the water and in England.

I may add that the fever has just about reached its height, and I am curious to see if there will be a gradual diminution of interest in the game. Ping-pong lasted a year, diabolo two, bicycling five; bridge has lasted ten. How much longer will it endure? It is worth mentioning, in this connection, that straight whist has survived two centuries, only to be jostled, if not displaced, by bridge. Nearly two hundred years ago Lady Mary Wortley Montague wrote to a friend from Bath, where she had gone to take the waters—presumably for spleen:

I am bored to death. I hear nothing but the eternal questions, "What's trumps? Who's to play?"

The whist fever did devastating work in the last century in England. Indeed, it must have been more prevalent in society than bridge is at the present time, if such a thing were possible.

I have heard many people say that bridge has killed the pleasures of society. The formality, punctilio, and chivalry of it have, they claim, been swept away by this pestiferous game.

Can you remember the formal and gloomy dinners in New York about ten years ago before bridge had come to bless and brighten them? Do you recall the agonized hours you spent at them? What terrible things they were! Twenty ladies in tiaras, twenty gentlemen in stiff, straight, high collars. Course after course of disguised food products; then the gossip among the ladies and the long, black cigars among the men; the taxing talk about stocks, golf, and politics. Then—most terrible of all—the meeting of the sexes in that stiff and impressively formal drawing-room; the chandeliers blazing, the heat

incredible; the boredom insupportable; those awful Louis Quatorze chairs; those forced tête-à-têtes; and that general atmosphere of constraint and formality until the carriages were called and the lights extinguished. Can you say that bridge is a social curse, after remembering the torture of those solemn gatherings?

Now, thank Heaven, all has been changed. Small dinners—eight or twelve, a very few good things to eat, turnover collars, liqueurs with the ladies, and bridge and chatter and laughter, and comfortable chairs and cigarettes, and—best of all—go home when you want to.

This is, to be sure, the point of view of a player. For a non-bridger I can imagine nothing more maddening than the social tyranny of bridge. My advice to the man who dines out in New York and cannot or will not play bridge is—suicide! A few of these forlorn and melancholy spirits still grace the dinner-tables of the rich, but their lot is wormwood and their sufferings must be excruciating. They are pariahs at best—supernumeraries; lost souls.

There is so much rubbish talked about the very high gambling at bridge among women in society and the evil effects of it that I often wonder where and when all these vast sums are won and lost. According to the Sunday supplements, society is a legalized gambling-hell with no limit to the stakes. Everybody is risking a fortune on the turn of the card. "Newport leaders" are selling their houses; "prominent society women" are committing suicide; "wealthy clubmen" are cheating and being driven out of country houses; and the "Smart Set" is full of wailing and impoverished women, who have lost their all at a fashionable bridge-party!

But this is not all. Drinking goes with bridge, and cigarettes go with drinking. The ladies must, therefore, be heavy smokers and drinkers. In short, bridge has ushered in an entirely new code of morals, and, solely on account of it, we have returned to the follies and extravagances of the Roman Empire under Caligula and the disso-

lute court at Versailles under Louis XIV.

The pulpit has taken up the scent and we have been treated to a wonderful series of sermons on the evils of card-playing. Doctor Rainsford, from his pulpit at St. George's Church, New York, was the first to expose the terrible evil. He drew a lurid picture of a poor young lady in New York who was overjoyed because she had won over five hundred dollars at bridge in a single hour. Now, this story is ridiculous on the face of it, as, in order to accomplish this marvel, the poor young lady in question must have played as high as dollar stakes.

The good doctor evidently thought that bridge was, like roulette, a game of pyramid profits where a stake might be multiplied hundreds of times in a minute. Bridge, as everybody knows, is nothing of the sort. It is a game where a stake may be won or lost only after the completion of a rubber—say, twenty-five minutes; and, unless the stakes are inordinately high—which, in society, they are *not*—such gains are absolutely impossible.

Doctor Huntington at Grace Church followed Doctor Rainsford's lead, only, instead of observing the old Hoyle rule of "second hand low," he drew a still more terrifying picture of a wealthy young man who was ruined and utterly impoverished by bridge. We cannot help wondering whether Doctor Rainsford's poor young lady was the cause of his financial collapse.

Here the misconception in the doctor's mind was, evidently, that the game resembled Wall Street. It might suddenly take a bad turn, and, if the margin were not sufficient, the original investment could easily be lost ten or twenty times over. This idea is also, of course, absurd.

Now, the plain truth about "society" bridge is that people play for what they can afford. Everybody in it respects the man or woman who says frankly: "I can only afford penny points," or five-cent points, or whatever the individual's limit may be. Cards may be a waste of time; they may keep people

away from more important affairs, but to say that a love of bridge connotes anything like a lax moral sense is, of course, preposterous.

As to smoking! It is true that very many women in New York society smoke cigarettes. If they didn't they would be totally unlike the women in English society or in the society of Spain, Greece, Italy, Russia, Hungary, and other European countries.

As to drinking! There is practically *no* drinking among the women in the smart society of New York. They may drink a little with their meals, but that is all. The reason for this is, possibly, that it is considered vulgar. Fashion has more to do with regulating our conduct than we like to believe.

All this is seemingly irrelevant, but bridge has been blamed for so many evils that I trust my readers will excuse this little digression from my theme.

A very natural and a very happy result of playing bridge in society has been the abrogation of rules and penalties. Certain rules are still, of course, observed. The penalty for a revoke is enforced; a misdeal must be dealt over; but in mixed bridge at fashionable houses nearly all other rules are allowed to go by the board. Indeed, in the smartest gentlemen's club in New York to-day the rules are seldom referred to or enforced.

This is as it should be. The game is, after all, purely a diversion. You are presumably playing with gentlemen—men whose standard of honor and behavior is sure to be high. They will never try to take advantage of you. Rules are made to prevent cheating and unfair play, but in a lady's house or in a gentleman's club such things are impossible, and, as a result of this feeling among well-bred people, the rules are considered unnecessary. Players are naturally expected to know the conventions of the game, but a strict enforcement of a penalty is seldom met with, except the rules for revokes, played cards, and turned tricks.

Let us take an example. Two gentlemen are playing with two ladies. One

of the ladies has dealt, looked at her hand and carelessly declared hearts, having no hearts in her hand and six diamonds. Would any gentleman care to insist upon her original make when she suddenly discovers her error and explains it to her adversaries and partner? The rule is that the make stands, but who would enforce it? Why should a lady not lead out of the wrong hand, or touch the cards in her dummy? She cannot be doing this with any idea of cheating. It can only be an error. She may be corrected, but she should not be penalized.

I am reminded of a little anecdote connected with a Mr. B., a well-known "ladies' man" in New York. His impressive manner, his handsome face, his subtle gift of flattery, and his romantic nature made him, wherever he went, extremely popular with the ladies. One of his victims assured me that he had the manners of Prince Demidoff and the assurance of Jesse James.

He was dining in Washington at Senator B.'s. The dinner was given in honor of Miss X., the beautiful niece of the then British ambassador. This lady was a very brilliant bridge-player. She had no sense of humor and took the game very seriously. Rumor even went so far as to hint that she was a little too keen about her gains and losses.

As soon as our Adonis sat down at dinner his eyes rested with favor upon Miss X., who sat directly opposite him at table and who was an absolute stranger to him. Never, he thought, had he seen anybody so beautiful—so worthy of a brave man's love. After the cigars he asked to be presented. His opening was something to the effect that he had been unable to eat his dinner because of the perverse and diabolical witchery of her eyes. She interrupted this little verbal bouquet by asking him if he played bridge, to which he replied that if he could be sure of holding the queen of hearts, etc., etc.

"Never mind all that piffle," she said, a little tartly.

After this body-blow they sat down at the table with two friends and cut

the cards for partners. Ten-cent stakes were agreed upon, and Adonis cut Miss X. Rolling his eyes in a most dramatic fashion, he remarked that he was certain to be defeated. The God of Love had so befriended him in the choice of a partner that the God of Chance was now certain to treat him shamefully.

"Would you mind dealing?" was Miss X.'s only answer to this florid sally.

He finished the deal, but before looking at his cards, he leaned over the table and said dramatically: "I declare hearts. With such a partner they cannot lead me wrong."

He then picked up his cards and found that he had dealt himself an absolutely worthless hand, with only one low heart, four low clubs, six low diamonds, and the ten, nine of spades. The leader promptly doubled and led the king of hearts. Miss X.'s dummy went down with five honors in diamonds, three small hearts, and five high spades.

Adonis was a trifle dismayed, but continued to smile affably at his partner. "There can be no disaster;" he seemed to say, "when love has shown us the way."

After the murder was over and the leader had taken six heart tricks and six clubs, and scored up a small slam, Miss X., with a decidedly annoyed expression and a slightly acid tone, remarked:

"Mr. B. this is bridge—not a kissing-game. I suppose I like a compliment as well as most women, but your twenty-dollar sample is enough for tonight."

I recently chided a fashionable woman for her devotion to bridge; her answer was illuminating.

"What else can one do? The wives of the poor have so much to occupy their minds and hands—washing, ironing, cooking, making clothes, dressing their children, and working in a sweatshop; but I, alas, can't perform these humble labors; they are all done for me. My husband leaves at nine and returns at six—what am I to do? I'm too fat for golf; I'm afraid of riding

in motors; the doctors won't allow me to eat; my husband refuses to permit me to flirt; if I lie down and rest I feel myself growing perceptibly fatter; cigarettes make me giddy; the current novels are all idiotic; my children are at boarding-school. And so, my dear friend, I am literally *forced* to play bridge. Bridge is the rich woman's sweatshop. We are driven to it by a cruel, inexorable fate, just as the poor are driven to their sewing-machines. As a matter of fact, I hate the game. I never play without being urged and—why, here come the Grandolets for tea. How lucky! Now we'll have some nice quick rubbers before dressing for dinner. Hurry up—ring for the table and the cards!"

We must give such fair devils as this their due. We must try always to remember that these blessed society ladies of ours are the most circumspect and moral women in any large capital of the world. They may be idle, extravagant, and artificial, but they are well behaved, and take their boredom with fortitude and without the kindly assistance of some dashing male acquaintance. Let us remember, too, that bridge may help to train their intellects, tact, and judgment. It will, perhaps, cultivate their powers of observation and calculation—as far as such a thing is possible with a mere lady.

Boswell once pointed out to Doctor Johnson the merchants in the City, who were grubbing and grinding and sweating their lives away with no other purpose than to amass money.

"Is it not a terrible spectacle?" he cried.

"Sir," remarked the pompous fat man, "men are seldom so worthily employed."

In like manner when a bitter critic holds up his hands in holy horror and points to four society women glued to the bridge table, as they add up the honor score—with only a trifling error or two—and dexterously deal the cards with those sensitive, jeweled, tapering, manicured fingers of theirs, I am tempted to restrain him gently and exclaim:

"Sir! I prithee, forbear, these exotic and wayward beings are rarely so powerless to do us a mortal mischief."

They say that when a young man plays an excellent game of billiards it is a proof of a wasted life. Most ladies of fashion play a good game of bridge. Can this possibly indicate that our society women ought to have more to do, more interests and tastes with which to fill up the chinks of their luxurious leisure?

I must close this article by quoting a hand that was recently submitted to a whist periodical, as I think it may interest my readers. It is one of those many hands in which an inference can safely be drawn about the make. I have appended the solution of it at the end of this article.

The score is four to ten in favor of A and B. Z deals and makes it no trumps. The two of diamonds is led by A showing a four-card suit. How should the hand be played by B and Z? The cards were as follows:

A. (Leader) Jack, 10, 5, 2 of diamonds. 8, 6, 5 of hearts. 10, 8 of clubs. King, 7, 5, 3 of spades.

Y. (Dummy) Queen, 9, 8 of diamonds. 10, 4 of hearts. King, queen, jack, 6, 5, 2 of clubs. 9, 2 of spades.

B. (Third hand) King, 7, 4 of diamonds. Queen, jack, 9, 2 of hearts. Ace, 7, 4 of clubs. Queen, 10, 6 of spades.

Z. (Dealer) Ace, 6, 3 of diamonds. Ace, king, 7, 3 of hearts. 9, 3 of clubs. Ace, jack, 8, 4 of spades.

I am meditating an article in which I shall attempt to say a few words about partners—good and bad—and their annoying peculiarities.

The ladies should properly receive attention under such subdivisions as:

(1) The lady who has never read a book on bridge.

(2) The belle who plays only for amusement.

(3) The crafty widow.

(4) The tea and muffin crank.

(5) The great card holder.

(6) The deliberate and meditative lady.

(7) The hog.

- (8) The post-mortem lady.
- (9) The woman who won't stop.
- (10) The girl who is superstitious.
- (11) The telephone fiend.
- (12) The divorcée who has forgotten to bring her purse.
- (13) The creature who says: "But how was I to know that you held," etc.
- (14) The poor girl who always has such atrociously bad luck.
- (15) The matron who remarks: "Well, Elwell says—"
- (16) The chatterbox.
- (17) The fidget.

But I shall doubtless be merciful and treat only a few of their less terrible and heart-breaking characteristics.

Solution of the no-trump hand quoted in the body of this article.

The italicized card wins the trick.

This is a hand in which an important inference can safely be drawn at the very first trick. Third hand must see that the dealer *presumably* holds the ace of diamonds or he would probably not have risked a no-trump make. If such is the case, it would be folly for him to play his king of diamonds. Such a play would "set up" the queen of diamonds as a sure reentry for the long suit of clubs in dummy. Even if the dealer has *not* the ace of diamonds, third hand's play of a low card will not lose him a trick. As the cards lie, his play of the king of diamonds would enable the dealer to make ten tricks—five in clubs, two in diamonds, two in hearts and one in spades.

Trick 1.—2 of diamonds, 8, 4, *ace*. The dealer loses a trick here by overtaking dummy's 8 of diamonds, but it is the correct play, however, as, in the

event of his having led from a four-card diamond suit to the king, as seems to be the case, the dealer can "set up" the queen of diamonds in dummy as an almost certain reentry card for the club suit. Without this diamond entry in the dummy, the clubs can never be made; unless the ace were to fall, or be played, on the first trick—a very unlikely contingency.

Trick 2.—9 of clubs, 10, *jack*, 4.

B must not play his ace of clubs or he will set up the whole club suit in the dummy.

Trick 3.—*King of clubs*, 7, 3, 8.

B loses a trick here by not playing his ace, but he cannot afford to risk it, as the dealer may have both of the remaining clubs and thus make the clubs in dummy.

Trick 4.—2 of clubs, *ace*, 3, 5.

Trick 5.—*Queen of hearts*, *king*, 6, 4.

B must leave the diamonds alone and try for the hearts, otherwise the queen of diamonds is sure to take a trick in the dummy.

Trick 6.—6 of diamonds, 10, *queen*, *king*.

Trick 7.—*Jack of hearts*, *ace*, 8, 10.

Trick 8.—7 of hearts, 3 of spades, 5 of clubs, 9 of hearts.

Trick 9.—2 of hearts, 3 of diamonds, 5 of spades, 6 of clubs.

Trick 10.—7 of diamonds, 4 of spades, 9 of diamonds, *jack*.

Trick 11.—5 of diamonds, queen of clubs, 6 of spades, 8.

Trick 12.—7 of spades, 2, queen, *ace*.

Trick 13.—*Jack of spades*, *king*, 9, 10.

The dealer loses the odd trick, instead of winning four by cards as he would have done if third hand had played his king of diamonds on the first trick.



THE WANDERERS

THEY wander over land and sea,
In forests dim, through crowded marts,
Searching for Peace, unceasingly,
That all the while lies deep within their hearts.

TORRANCE BENJAMIN.



'M a-settin' on the platform of my emporium one hot August afternoon, tryin' to ketch a stray breath of air that I can take into my lungs without fryin' 'em, when my chinny-blues light on old Snuff Peters, who literal throws himself out of the Square Deal store, run by a young gent we calls Sid Glover. It's plain that somethin' 'sides the heat is agitatin' Snuff, as he's got his hand on his forty-five like he intends business immediate. But present he lets go of his gun and starts for the Road to Hell. His stubby fingers is toyin' with his straw whiskers and his copper face is furrowed reflective by a lot of extry wrinkles, but, jest 'fore he gets to the saloon, he raises his bushy head and I sees from the way his yaller eyes is dancin' that he's pow'rful tickled over some notion that apparent just hits him.

"She's a winner, Red; she's a winner—sure," grins the old gent into my oninstructed ear.

But, not knowin' what kind of a game my snuff-colored friend is figurin' on, I can't pass judgment definite, so I twists my auburn lip and assembles my freckles, a ob servin' general:

"Usual, Snuff, there's somethin' wrong with every dead-sure system, and I advises you to look the play over mighty careful 'fore you sets in your checks."

"A royal ain't near the cinch this is," he laughs, boisterous confident.

Then like a flash of lightnin' he's took wit' a fit of uncontrollable rage.

Hunchin' his thick-set shoulders as though 'bout to strangle somebody, he turns toward the Square Deal and raisin' his knotty-knuckled fist he shakes it pugnacious at that blisterin', on-painted mart of trade as he chokes:

"I'm the stingiest cowman on the Little Missouri, be I, Sid?" Pausin' a instant, his crooked nose nervous twitches and his long nails presses deep into his seamy hands like the words he's jest spoke has hurt him terrible; then he rasps as if the commercial gent is present: "Well, whether I be or not, money ain't no object to me when it comes to gettin' even with anybody who insults me gratooitous as you has just done."

After his blow-off the old man ca'ms down, but don't explain why Glover labels him the champion dollar-squeezor of the Dakoty Bad Lands. Nat'rally I'm plenty curious to know what the row's about, for there ain't never been bad blood 'tween 'em; but, on the Range, it not only shows bad breedin', but it's some dangerous to oninvited poke your nose into a gent's private affairs, so I keeps my tongue hitched, a-combin' my carrot locks, inquirin' sympathetic, and waits for Peters to spread the cards. He present indicates that he's hankerin' for stimulant, and while we're frontin' my immitation walnut he scowls whimsical.

"Seems like this camp needs a good store where things can be bought right; and"—his tone gets growlin' earnest—"I intends to save folks bein' robbed any longer by this yer Glover jest as soon as I gets ready to open up agin' him."

"Don't look to me as though there's

room for two general stores, and might be Sid would sell to you." I ventures, innocent suggestive.

"Which won't nowise suit me"—his tone is sure vindictive—"for I designs to run him out 'less he's got a lot bigger bank-roll than I credits him with."

"I guess you has dollars to his cents; but"—my josh is some caustic, for I values the store gent exceedin' high—"when it comes to bein' personal popular, I has a strong hunch that Sid's got millions to your mills; and"—aimin' to discourage him complete—"I feels confident that you can't stand behind a counter and give your truck away agin' the Square Deal's offerin' it regular."

"Them views ain't special flatterin'," cackles the old Injun, entire ondisturbed by my shots, "but I surmises that you overstates her a little, for I notices that a man's friends is invariable second to his pocket whether it's on the Little Missouri or 'back in the States. But however that is, Red"—laughin', raisin' his glass—"I gives you a pointer that when I opens there'll be somebody 'hind the counter that makes the Range instant forget they's sech a feller livin' as Sid Glover, who's due for the biggest s'prise-party he ever gets in his life."

"Well," I fires at random, "look out that you don't get a worse one 'fore the deal is finished."

But Snuff only chuckles complacent that he's pickin' out his own cards and ain't worryin' himself none whatever 'bout what's left in the deck. Then he lumbers away like a big cinnamon bear-a-walkin' on its hind legs. And it ain't but a few seconds till I sees him straddle his pony and go gallopin' down the trail which winds along the river that, under the blazin' sun, ripples like boilin' gold as it races round the foot of a lignite-seamed butte which raises its rocky, bald head five hundred feet high just north of camp.

"Wonder what the irate gent's got up his sleeve for Sid," I says, idle gazin' at his trailin' cloud of gray-white alkali dust which comes slow-siftin' over the weather-beat shacks and scattered tents we calls "Hell's Kitchen."

But thinkin' don't seem to give any flash to his hand, and my mind goes wanderin' to the old codger himself, who I knows intimate for years. He is close-fisted, all right, and certain drives a hard bargain, so, course, in a country where everybody else is almost idiotic prodigal, Snuff won't do to bet on in a popularity-votin' contest. And, like most people with a special weak spot in their armor, this nearness of his'n is the touchiest place he can be hit. But at bottom he's as square as they make 'em and 'preciates a joke or a drink as well as the next one. I has to admit, though, that he has all the out'ard signs of bein' a sore-toed old bear, but I personal knows that his rough chest hides a mighty soft spot if you rubs the fur the right way.

And I happens to know, too, that he has other gods which complete outrank the almighty dollar, for every year since I meets up with him he sends a good-sized bank-roll to a widder sister, who's got a half-dozen kids that she's tryin' to keep alive by raisin' ter-backer 'back in Kentucky. The old man used to go to see his folks sometimes, and always comes home a-tellin' how he wants to bring along the one he calls his "little gal," but can't 'count of her ma needin' her.

It's now near three years since he visits his flock, but of late he's been talkin' of inspectin' 'em, so my hair don't flame up any more'n usual when early the next mornin' Snuff shuffles to the bar rigged for travel. As he sets down his grip his yaller eye glints self-complacent, then he grins effusive.

"Jest goin' down to old Kaintuck to see the widder and her jewels," sech bein' the way he always refers to the kids, for he tells me that like some ancient furrin' female he reads about they're the only ones his sister owns.

"This hurry-up desire to greet your relatives ain't got nothin' to do with this little s'prise-party you're arrangin' for Sid, has it?" I returns, facetious inquirin', for I suspects that he's inadvertent or intentional exposin' a card of the hand he's bankin' on so confident.

But 'stead of answerin' he pours out

his liquor and crooks his elbow. Then his fingers brush over his moist lips and he sly winks.

"I ain't a-showin' my cards now to nobody, Red, but when you sees my hand you sure concedes it to be a winner."

And producin' a little case he takes a pinch of dust—that bein' the only way he uses the weed—then holds up his silver box.

"Never shows you this afore"—a prideful grin playin' on his sole-leather cheeks as he hands it to me to examine at closer range.

"From Lucy to Uncle Snuff" is graved on its top, and on the bottom I reads: "Have some."

"Which that female who gives you this ornate jim-crack," I comments, admirin', "is certain some dexterous with words."

"She's the 'little gal' I tells you 'bout.' He's apparent eager to talk. "And say, Red"—his wrinkles lightin' enthusiastic—"she's a wonder. Never does nothin' like anybody else; and I honest believes she's the smartest female in the whisky State. That ain't all, neither"—now that he gets goin' he don't seem able to rein up—"if she's blossomed like she gives promise of doin' when I last sees her in the bud, there ain't a handsomer gal ever looks in a glass than she is."

The old feller's seamed face looks actual soft as he stands singin' her praises. Then he straightens up as he takes his trinket, and says prouder'n Punch:

"She sends it to me for my last birthday; never fergits that—never has since she was a four-year-old."

Stoppin', he pulls his saffron-gray whiskers meditative, but present he flushes defensive, a-showin' that Sid's words has certain cut deep.

"And even if I be the stingiest cowman on the Range, like this store gent who I'm a-goin' to bust says I am, you can bet your last chip that Lucy won't ever want for anything while I'm alive; no"—slammin' his tough fist down so hard it rattles the bottles and the glasses

on the pine back bar—"nor after I cashes in, neither, for then she'll be the boss of the best payin' cattle-ranch on the Little Missouri."

He's so complete locoed over this niece of his'n that I figures I'd a certain had a day of his worshipin' gab if the stage hadn't come along about that time and set me free.

Now, bein' a curious critter, I drops over to the Square Deal immediate, and it ain't many minutes 'fore I hears what causes the row.

"Why, the old lemon-rat," indignant explains the store gent, shakin' his black head emphatic, "has been jewin' me on everything he buys from the day I opens; and yesterday he keeps hammin' me down on that saddle and bridle, that he's actual crazy to own"—pointin' his slim fingers at a Mexican which is profuse silver ornamented with ditto head-gear—"till at last I loses my temper; and—mebbe the heat makes me onusual irritable—I tells him plain what I thinks of him."

"Well, speakin' classic, you sure hits him in the heel, and to salve the wound he's goin' to start another store."

"The devil he is!" exclaims Sid, his coal eyes wide astonished.

For a minute or two they's a worried look on his general devil-may-care phiz, then he busts out laughin'.

"I guess that ain't nothin' to fret over, after all, for"—his sides shakin' ag'in—"I calculates Snuff'll be the only customer I loses."

And not knowin' positive what the old man's hand is goin' to be, I walks off without tellin' the conceited young gent that I has a strong suspicion that it's more'n even money he'll be cow-punchin' again 'fore snow flies.

But for the next two weeks the bank, regardless of whose dealin', keeps losin' so heavy that I can't find time to think of anybody's troubles but my own; then the luck turns. It's 'long toward evenin' of that day when I strolls outside to get the smoke drove from my breathin'-apparatus. And the first thing my eye ketches sight of is the stage roundin' a knoll east of camp.

On the seat 'side, the mule-skinner I sees some snuff-whiskers a-playin' in the breeze so profuse that there ain't no doubt in my mind as to whose chin is anchorin' them tossin' yaller-grays.

"Snuff ain't bringin' the girl with him, after all," thinks I, "for he'd sure be inside if he was."

This notion relieves me a lot, for I've been figurin' that the old fox is intendin' to put Lucy behind his counter. And as the Range lacks one of makin' two sets when it comes to females, none of them bein' eligibles, it goes without sayin' that a good-lookin' girl clerk tyin' up packages at the new store sure makes wrappin'-paper total unecessary at the Square Deal. But the next minute I realizes more'n ever that if I wants to be right I got to be a lot less hasty in drawin' conclusions: for with the stoppin' of that swayin' Concord my chinys near pop from their settin' as I glimpses a blonde female, who certain has all the points necessary to set a temperamental gent's blood to movin' some rapid on sight.

Snuff's wrinkles mellers into a tickled grin as he sees my bulgin' optics starin' so unconscious imperlite at the brown-eyed heart-disturber who's framed in the stage winder. Wavin' his hand at her, he chuckles in high feather:

"The 'little gal' I tells you 'bout, Red."

Lucy smiles amiable, showin' a milk-white line guarded by curvin' lips so meltin' that even the scarred old thing I carry in my tough breast instant jumps to a gallop. I'm considerable flustered, but I grips my breedin' and bows profound, intendin' to foller with a choice *jew de spree*, but Sid's unexpected appearin' knocks this gem complete out of my head.

The old man screws his eyes and glares at the store gent like he ain't instant equal to the occasion, but it's evident that the girl is expectin' a introduction, for she glances inquirin' at her uncle's beetlin' straw brows. Then her irate relative makes up his mind to do the polite and show his hand at the same time.

"Sid Glover, Lucy"—his tone gets

malicious humorous as he springs his s'prise—"the gent we'll soon be doin' business ag'in'inst."

This onlooked-for news must have give Sid a awful jolt, for he knows as well as I does what'll happen to the Square Deal with sech opposition, but he plays the game a lot too well to show that he's at all oneeasy. Doffin' his Stetson, he stretches out his arm a-smilin'.

"Well, that ain't no reason why *we* shouldn't be friendly"—his black eyes shinin' most persuasive.

And whether she knows why she's been brought to the Dakoty Bad Lands or not, for a answer she onhesitatin' puts her plump fingers in that eager-waitin' fist; and if that forward, presumin' gent don't give 'em a trifle more pressure than is absolute required at a first hand-shake, I complete misses my guess, for present Lucy flushes, then draws away her little paw, though I notes partiklar 'tain't done at lightnin' speed.

Heretofore I never considers Glover to be nowise susceptible, but it is plumb evident now that at last a female has come along who sweeps him off his feet from the jump. And it looks, too, as though he makes a powerful impression on her, for I observes a pleased flicker in them brown eyes that argoos danger to the old man's seemin' invincible hand.

Snuff glowers at 'em speculative, but if he has any s'pcion that Coopid is goin' to take cards in his game he don't show it, and a second later he goes with the ribbon-handler for a drink. And, as I—at that moment—considers that my show of inducin' the girl to give up general merchandisin' for a full half-interest in the best-payin' liquor business in the Bad Lands is somethin' less than one in a million, I follers suit and obliterates myself from view.

Then, by tactful insistin' on treatin' a couple of rounds, I manages to hold the old gent long enough to give Sid some chance to proper foller his openin' lead. But final free whisky won't hold the old fox no longer, and the stage rolls over to the Palace where

he quarters Lucy, a-takin' a room himself.

Practical everybody in camp eats at the hotel, and the next mornin' when I walks in for breakfast, I sees niece and uncle at the round table we calls "private," which stands by the slidin' doors that leads to the parlor. The girl turns on a warmin' smile at sight of my freckles, and Snuff gives me a invite to eat with 'em.

I'm positive I don't lose no time in plantin' my six feet 'longside of the brown-eyed magnet that's to draw the Square Deal's trade. Lucy's mighty cordial, and, bein' superlative optimistic when it comes to eligibles, I disregards all my past falls, and soon finds myself more'n half-dreamin' that I'm in the runnin'.

And this idee gallops away with me when, 'bout ten seconds later, Sid comes sa'nterin' in. As he ketches sight of the girl his dark face lights up confident cordial as though he's dead sure of his standin'; but he certain changes both his notion and his expression quick, for Lucy jest bare notices him, then makes herself more charmin' to me than previous.

Glover is so entire throwed off his feed by his unexpected freezin' that soon as he swallers some coffee he trails out plumb dejected. But Snuff is so tickled—we're now left alone—that he can't help showin' it, and he chuckles his niece under the chin playful, a-laughin':

"You handles that presumin' gent jest right, Lucy; and—"

"Don't talk about it, uncle," she cuts in, colerin' impatient.

He paws his cinnamons thoughtful for a second, then gets up sayin' he's got to see 'bout startin' the work on a old buildin' he's goin' to use temporary for his store. Now, speakin' general, a gent that don't take advantage of opportunity ain't grounded in the first principles of the allurin' game of love, and I never loses no tricks on that account. So I immediate comments on the silver-gray harness Lucy's buckled up in: and I grows special enthusiastic over the blue trimmin's of her head-gear, which I delicate insinooates sets

off her shinin' gold hair killin' effective. But my openin' don't even pan color, for she idle drums her fingers on the table, entire heedless of my flatterin' words.

Then she tips her hand by askin' plumb irrelevant:

"Be you and Mr. Glover good friends?"

This jarrin' shift of subject clears the amorous cobwebs from my idiotic brain, for they's a note in her smooth soprano that gives me to understand definite that I ain't deuce high in her lover's pack. Course I has to beat a hurry retreat, but I tries to do it graceful by askin' facetious:

"Ever hear of Damon and Pythias?"

"Read about 'em once in a story-book," she flashes whimsical, droopin' her eye.

"Well," I whispers, gettin' my face as close to her pink little ear as I dares, "they wasn't nothin' whatever to each other, 'longside of Sid and me."

She discreet draws back her head from the danger-zone a-laughin' into my chinys.

"Then I'm goin' to ask you to do somethin' for me that you may think's funny; but"—a droll smile races over her face—"you seems so like an own—"

"Jest a minute," I breaks in hurried, as for once I wants to play that old card first myself. "While I only knows you fourteen hours in actoal time"—I lays my hand on my heart and my face is owl-solemn—"I swears that in the last two minutes I has come to regard you as a own sister, so," I has to grin it, "bein' a brother to you—now, you has a right to ask most anything of me."

Her eyes has a merry, understandin' twinkle as she dimples.

"I takes you at your word, for I reciprocates sech feelin' entire."

And then she half-hesitatin' tells me that she wants Sid to know that her coolness is put on 'count of her uncle.

"Then I s'pose," I teases brother-familiar, "that if Snuff 'casional vacates the lookout and the store gent jest happens to drop round 'bout that time, he'll find the temperatoore some warmer than he does at breakfast."

"Under sech—accidental circumstances"—her flushin' meller laugh I uses thereafter place of actooal instructions—"I considers myself free to act entire nat'ral. But"—her brows knittin' anxious—"it ain't likely Mr. Grover'll ever want to speak to me after the way I treats him."

"Well—sister"—I can't help grinnin' at the worried pucker on her face—"Sid is a most forgivin' cuss, and I feels confident that after I talks to him he'll total forget his late freezin' and look for'ard hopeful to the futoore."

"But you mustn't tell him anything more'n I told you to"—shakin' her finger at me warnin'.

But I takes her words *cum graner*, and as this ends our tate-er-tate, I trails for the Square Deal direct.

Sid's hunched up on a pile of hoss-blankets with his black topknot restin' spiritless on the saddle that causes the row 'tween him and the old man.

"Seems like Snuff's got a hand that sure freezes you out," I joshes, knowin' that 'tain't fear of losin' trade that glooms him.

"I ain't a-settin' here gnawin' my heart out over no sech minor matter as bein' busted in business," groans that pict're of woe, smilin' dismal.

I'm some tempted to keep on playin' with him 'fore I pours out the healin' ba'm I bears. But it's plain he's actooally hit hard and is sufferin' deep, so I waives sech desire and administers the remedy at once. And havin' construed my powers *ad lib*, he's jest 'bout as despondent, when I leaves, as folks usual is who hear a old aunt has cashed in and left 'em a million. Then I immediate notifies my anxious latest sister that the scales of outraged feelin' has fell from Sid's eyes so that he can now see the layout clear and accurate.

For the next week Snuff keeps close tab on Lucy. But her surface indications don't show no more interest in the store gent than if he's a Sioux Injun. And Sid certain is some deep, too, for he hardly so much as looks her way when he comes to grub. But I has a idee that, several times when the old man is off watch, them prospective

trade rivals grasps opportunity sufficient to exchange the compliments of the day.

Though assumin' sech to be the case their play is so artistic fine that final Snuff gets overconfident and quits case-keepin'; then goes to Glendive for ten days a-leavin' niece to boss the buildin' which he figures'll be ready time he gets back.

Soon as the girl takes charge of the job there's always a bunch of eligible gents hangin' round, apparent takin' a powerful interest in every piece of board that's used 'bout the place. And these hopeful hunters sure manages to monopolize the blonde's daytime almost exclusive; but—quotin'—"when night falls o'er the plain" Sid gets his innin's which are held extreme private in the Palace parlor.

Then, one idle day, to amooze myself—for I delves more or less into the occult—I takes my 'strology book and casts Snuff's horoscope; and after I careful notes all the signs celestial, I pays speshul 'tention to the terrestrial foreshadowin's, for I holds you can't get no accurate tip to the futoore from the stars alone. And after I checks up the omens pro and con I gets this readin':

"Bout this time look out for a smooth-faced, dark-haired gent, who, 'less he's watched extreme careful, probable steals your blonde card."

But as there ain't no telegraph I can't wire this warnin' to the unsuspectin' old gent, so I jest folds my hands and watches natoore take her unobstructed course.

That same afternoon I notices a on-usual stirrin' of the camp's females, and in the evenin' they assembles *en masse* at the Palace a-holdin' their meetin' secret behind locked doors.

The next mornin' Rosey Marvin—'fore she splices up with Lucky we calls her the "Daughter of the Ranges"—corrals me, and 'tain't hard to see that she's boolin' excited.

"Mornin', Red," she bubbles, noddin' her black head and stretchin' out her brown little paw extra friendly. And without takin' breath she claps her

hands and laughs the riddle: "Guess what us ladies makes up our minds to do at our meetin' last night?"

"I gives it up, Rosey, for you knows I'm a failure complete when it comes to figurin' on female intellectooal manuverin's."

"Well, you might of asked, anyway, 'stead of tryin' to be funny," she answers, tiltin' her nose sarcastic.

Then she throws up her hands exclaimin':

"Get ready to open your eyes wide! We're"—she ripples delighted—"goin' to give a s'prise-party for—Snuff Peters the night he's to get back from Glendive."

They ain't no doubt of my bein' sufficient astonished at her ondreamed-of news, and she rattles on:

"It's his birthday, and the Range is goin' to show its regard additional by makin' him a expensive present, which with the music from Bismarck for the dance, after the s'prise, makes a lot of expense, so be liberal." She laughs persuadin', stickin' out her fist for my checks.

"I goes in blind, all right, Rosey"—I grins, takin' out my bank-roll and handin' her a couple of stacks of blues—"but I'm plumb curious to know how you women folks happens to take the notion of incitin' the Range to get up this celebration of the natal day of a gent whose admirers, I heretofore supposes, a round figure proper represents."

"Of course we all knows old Snuff ain't been *extra* popular, but"—her gray eyes soberin' and her contralter earnest emphatic—"there ain't a nicer girl ever comes into camp than Lucy; and when she suggests the s'prise there ain't one of us ladies but what's wild over it. And"—there's a pecul'ar flutterin' smile chases over her tan—"there sure was never 'nother sech a s'prise-party as this'n is goin' to be."

"What's the card that's billed to make this affair so plumb novel, Rosey?" I asks, coaxin' as, havin' dandled her on my knee when she's wearin' shorter dresses, I thinks she may give me a confidential flash.

But she purses up her red lips obstinate a-sayin':

"I'm dyin' to tell you, Red, but I crosses my heart not to breathe a word even to Lucky, so, Old Curiosity, you just got to wait and—see." Then away she flies to get her check-rack filled.

"'Cordin' to the old gent"—I mooses as I watches Rosey racin' along in her trim-fitin', red trottin'-rig—"Lucy never has forgot his birthday, so mebbe, after all, this buried card ain't nothin' more'n some special unique token of his lovin' niece's fection which she designs presentin' in some onheard-of fashion. But"—I shakes my brick-top skeptical—"if that's all the hold-out 'mounts to, why does my 'strology chart, when I looks at her last night, show that dark gent a-loomin' up even more threatenin' in Snuff's orbit than it does time I makes my readin' prior?"

But final I has to give up the puzzle entire onsolved, though the old man's words: "She never does nothin' like anybody else," continers to ha'nt me to the minute I dresses for the party.

Then I plants myself on the hotel verandy to note the signs.

I guess I ain't arrayed quite as gorgeous as Solomon, though I ain't entire shy of color and sparklers myself, but I knows I'm sportin' somethin' that that old proverb-manufacturer never's able to spring on his tribe, as my party rattlesnake belt holds a special built Colt's which I has of late taken to wearin' to full-dress affairs. And feelin' entire self-complacent 'bout my *toot onsome* bein' entire *oh fay*, I tilts my two-hundred-twenty careless-easy agin' the bare weather-boardin' and turns my chinys on the low-hangin' sun which is jest droppin' into its hot bunk behind the crimsonin' buttes; but the next tick I'm woke from a contemplatin' of prodigal natoore by Lucy's worryin':

"Oh, I does hope, Red, that nothin's happened to the stage, but it's twenty minutes late now."

"Twould be some tough on you females if there wasn't no *Hamlet* for your play," I laughs, airin' my classics, for I regards sech a play as total sound

when plain-featured gents is conversin' with the opposite sex.

But my flint don't strike no answerin' fire, for there's a relieved look flashes to her squintin' brown eyes as she cries: "There it is! There it is!" excited pointin' to a little cloud of alkali dust that's faint risin' over a clump of willers which fringe a bend of the river jest beyond the ford.

And in 'bout a minute four big black mules is splashin' through the muddy, yaller water, then come drippin', strainin' up the steep bank, and the buckskin snaps like a pistol as they gallops to the hotel.

"I was so 'fraid you might not get here in time, Uncle Snuff," gushes niece, a-throwin' herself into the old gent's arms and smackin' him terrible 'fectionate.

He acts tickleder'n a boy with his first copper-toed red-tops, and as the girl whispers somethin' he grins.

"I reckon it don't make no difference how a old codger's dressed at a young folks' party, but"—he's that delighted that his sole-leather face is one onendin' smile—"seein' you asks me to dance the first set with you, Lucy, I puts on my new patents which probably pinches some but glistens fine; and"—pattin' her gold hair fond caressin'—"that's the very best I kin do for you."

"You must be ready by eight—sharp, 'cause then everybody's to march from the office to the dinin'-room to the s'prise."

Snuff's dun brows knit astonishedlike, and he asks curious: "Who is this onusual herd got together for?"

But she shakes her golden locks and sort of pouts.

"A s'prise-party that you knows all 'bout wouldn't be none at all, but"—there's a sly twinkle in her brown eye—"I counts on you positive to do everything you can to make it a entire success."

"Which I sure does, little gal, to the limit," he pledges himself, a-tappin' her flushed cheek dotin' fond.

Then she calls him the dearest old thing in the world and skips for her room.

Five minutes 'fore the clock strikes, Rosey, who's actin' as floor-manager for the evenin', comes into the office where all the gents has been cut out separate, and the first thing her bright gray eye lights on is my pearl-handle gun.

"Us ladies jest decides a few minutes ago"—she puts out her hand and removes that glistenin' ornament from its holster, a laughin'—"that shootin'-irons ain't good form for to-night; so, boys"—glancin' roguish over the bunch—"if you wants to dance, carryin' a gun ain't no way to get a partner."

They ain't none of us able to understand the *why* of this innovation, but we don't lose no time in gettin' our forty-fives behind the desk, and as the clock strikes we marches behind Rosey to the dinin'-room, where we finds the rest of the females settin' round a preacher gent we calls "Deacon Paul."

Snuff's led right up front by the floor-manager, and for a minute there's a little shufflin' for position 'fore we final gets planted. They's a oneasy look in the old man's eye as he glimpses the exhorter and he gives a quick glance about him, but immediate seems less apprehensive on notin' that Sid ain't present.

But jest then the deacon gets to his feet, and as he's clearin' his throat preparatory, I feasts my light-blues on the charmin' color-scheme which the harnesses of the females presents. In the altogether they has the rainbow beat a mile, as they certain has decorated themselves for the extry event extreme gorgeous, but I don't get time to examine 'em in detail, for the preacher begins a-talkin'. And he sure does make a awful fine speech and winds up his preliminary by tellin' 'bout what a wonderful thing love is; and how it's always found in every hooman heart in some shape or other.

"Friends"—his cellar voice rumbles—"we has a most strikin' example of one phase of this beautiful sentiment in the meetin' of the Range to celebrate the birthday of our esteemed feller citizen—"

Pausin', his tall, lank form stoops for'ard, and as one lean hand brushes

back his thin gray hair, the other points straight as a gun at the thunderstruck old man, who looks most as paralyzed as if he's had a stroke, then the deacon's deep-set, mournin' eyes light as he smiles the name: "Snuff Peters."

The ladies claps their hands and the gents hollers vociferous, but the long hand raises and they's instant silence, for we all wants to see the next card.

"And, Snuff," continers the good man, placin' his fingers on a piece of cloth that's throwed over two chairs, "in behalf of the Range and as a more lastin' token of its regard, I now has the pleasure of presentin' you—this."

And as the coverin' is swept off, I sees restin' easy and ornate on the chair-pony the Mexican saddle and bridle that causes the row 'tween the old man and Sid.

Snuff sets there a blind-gazin' at his new property like he's most ready to bust out cryin', but the next tick we're all a-slappin' him on the back and shakin' hands so that he soon rounds to and sort of shaky expresses his thanks. Then his unsteady eye wanders, apparent seekin' somebody he don't see, and he leans over and whispers:

"Where's Lucy, Red?" But without waitin' for a answer, he puts his big fist into my ribs and chuckles: "It's all her doin'; it's all her doin'. Didn't I tell yer she's the smartest female ever lives"—his voice is peacock-proud, and his tone mellers, and it strikes me his yellow eyes is extry moist—"she never forgits my birthday—never!"

Now, I confesses candid that, spite of what I knows heretofore, I'm complete astonished to see what a awful store the old gent really does set on the girl, who I strong suspects ain't designin' this unique layout for his benefit exclusive. But I don't get much chance to think 'bout it, for the women now come rushin' up to Snuff, and by the time we hears the exhorter's rollin' voice a-callin' for order that old dun Lothario has contracted a dance with every one of 'em.

Things is ca'med down as the preacher raises his hand ag'in a-smilin'.

"Fore the dance begins I has an-

other pleasant duty, which comes as a great s'prise to some, but as a pleasant one I hopes. For, friends"—he gives a almost imperceptible nod to Rosey and she immediate tiptoes to the parlor doors—"it has been truly said that 'All the world loves a lover,' and"—he sol-emn laughs his joke—"we here has a pair to draw to."

Back slide the doors and there, standin' under a big red bell, is Lucy and Sid. The girl is certain a dream the way she's all got up in pure white; and she don't look to be sixteen, but her manner of holdin' that blonde head sure shows that she regards herself plenty old 'nough for what's 'bout to take place.

There's a silence for a second or two that ain't broke by nothin' but the stars a-whirlin' through space. Snuff's a-leanin' on his chin with his bulgin' eyes glued on them two still figures like he can't believe his own sight. Then his hand sneaks mechanical to his waist, and I sudden understands the reason why guns has been barred. Not findin' the plaything he's feelin' for, his fist drops down, and the silence is broke by the most expressive perfanity I ever enjoys listenin' to as the old man feelin' gasps:

"Well, I'll be damned!" which mild cuss-word causes a general roar, and 'fore Snuff full realizes what's goin' on, the words is said which makes the girl a life-partner in the Square Deal.

There's a instant stampede to congratulate the beamin' couple. But the old gent don't make a move. Jest sets there starin'—starin'. Then his wrinkles begin to break into a admirin' grin, and final he can't control his feelin's no longer, and leavin' over he whispers into my ready-waitin' ear:

"Didn't I tell yer, Red, that 'she never does nothin' like anybody else'?"

But 'fore I has a chance to answer, Lucy ketches his pleadin' eye and instant flies into the outstretched arms of a dotin' old gent, who is now genuine popular.

Then the fiddles scrape and the caller sings: "Swing that girl!" And the s'prise is over as the dance begins.



The OLD BLIGH

By E.F. Benson



T was about half-past four in the afternoon when Harry Wingate finally emerged from the motor-house into the stable-yard, covered with grime and grease and oil and all the essential juices of motors from head to foot, absolutely unrecognizable but completely happy. He and Alford, his chauffeur, had spent a memorable and blissful three days in taking the old Bligh car "really" to bits, properly cleaning it and putting it together again, and now the old Bligh stood there again, clean and in her right mind, after looking for three days like a complicated railway accident. "As good as ever she was," Harry said, "and probably better."

There was nothing particular known about cars that Harry did not know, and even if such chance detail existed, Alford would be able to supply the knowledge. For Harry was a real motorist, not a man who owns a dozen cars, of which he scarcely knows one from the other, but is content to be driven about the country in any that the chauffeur is so kind as to bring to the door. He owned but two, the old Bligh and the later Bertram, but he knew these as the trained doctor knows the nerves and arteries and glands and bones of the human body.

If the car was not running well, he would not say "What's the matter, Alford?" but by instinct, it almost seemed, though the instinct was the direct and legitimate result of intimate knowledge, he would say exactly what in the

internal economy of the car was not fulfilling its proper function.

Indeed motoring could scarcely be called a hobby with him; it was more rightly described as his passion, and Madge, his wife, declared that Harry said his prayers looking toward the motor-house, even as the Mohammedan turns to Mecca.

The old Bligh, at any rate, occupied a very distinct place in Harry's heart, partly because it had been a good and faithful servant, and partly because of sentimental reasons connected with it. He had bought it just before his marriage, and had gone off on his honeymoon with Madge in it directly after.

And the old Bligh had behaved like a perfect angel—as, indeed, it always did—on that occasion. It had not once got its engine overheated, nor had there been trouble with carburetter or sparking-plugs; it had permitted no envious stone or nail to puncture its tires; it had gone for a whole month with the regularity of the moon or stars.

And indeed that was the nature of the kind car; it was not very fast, for it was only a two-cylinder eight-horse-power, but it was rather like a stout-hearted cob, never ill, always ready to go out, and always getting to the place you wanted it to go to, if only you were reasonable. And for a car of its caliber its climbing power was certainly amazing; it had been up Birdlip Hill without once stopping to look at the view, and though it felt itself compelled to go backward when they took it out to climb Porlock Hill, it climbed it all right.

But six months ago now the new Ber-

tram—fifteen-horse-power, four-cylinder—had made its appearance, and it was with a certain sense of compunction last week that Harry thought that the old Bligh had been slighted and neglected. Madge, who had no more feeling about motors than she had about earwigs—indeed, rather less—infinitely preferred the higher speed and greater smoothness of the Bertram, and as, whenever the weather was fine, and very often when it was wet, Harry drove his wife after lunch over to the golf-links, continued his drive, and called for her again before tea-time, it followed that the Bertram had been almost exclusively used.

Indeed, on the only occasion lately when Madge had been out in the Bligh, the poor thing had rather disgraced itself, for a sparking-plug had a dreadful sort of cold, and she had missed her train. Then compunction had seized Harry; he realized that even the most agreeable and gifted car cannot clean itself, and a thorough overhauling of the old Bligh was the result.

He found that it had begun to rain rather heavily when he came out, but Madge had to be fetched from her golf, and he determined to drive the renovated Bligh over for that purpose. There was a cape-hood to it with wings, so that they would keep perfectly dry, and Alford had clearly had about enough to-day.

"Just run her once or twice up and down the hill, Alford," he said, "and I'll come round for her in half an hour, when I've got clean. She's fit to start off on a tour this minute, I feel sure, but you might just take her up and down that hill."

Half an hour later Harry set off on his six-mile drive to the Woodcombe links. It was raining steadily, and there was a sort of uniform thickness about the low clouds that might mean either that it had been raining for some time, or that it intended to rain some time more. Of the two alternatives Harry distinctly hoped for the latter, for Madge—there was no use denying it—had asked him to send for her at once if it began to rain, as she had a

slight cold, and had no intention of playing in the wet.

But then he had driven back and set to work again immediately on the Bligh, had forgotten all things else, and had no more notion of how long it had been raining than what he had had for dinner six months ago. He hoped Madge had not been sitting in the club-house all the afternoon.

He drove up past the window of the ladies' room, and saw Madge seated near the fire, and called her attention by a series of little hoots, which was a signal between them. She must have heard, but she did not look up, nor did she at once put down the paper she was reading. Instead she finished the page, and read for several minutes more.

Harry repeated the signal, though certain that she had heard him, and drew an inference that seemed sound. "It has been raining for a considerable time," he said to himself.

He was a person of quiet leisurely humor, content to see the amusing side of a great deal that a man of less tranquillity might have passed by as trivial, or grumbled at and complained of as being irritating. In consequence he wasted not one ounce of annoyance at the fact that Madge had clearly been made aware of his presence, but chose to keep him waiting in the rain for a few minutes, because he had kept her waiting in the club-house for, he was afraid, a rather long period, owing to his absorption over the old Bligh, and his forgetfulness to observe whether it was raining or not.

He fully intended to express regret for that, and wondered with a sense of coming entertainment as to whether she would express regret for keeping him. But in the meantime, the cape-hood completely kept out the rain; he was cheerfully content to wait till Madge had finished her paper. What a lot of papers they must take in, he thought, at the ladies' club-room; one would have imagined that she would have had time to read them all since lunch.

He kept one eye on Madge, and was delighted to observe her presently get

up with a moderately well-executed start of surprise, pick up her clubs, and come hurrying out. It was better than most plays to be married to Madge; you could not possibly guess what she was going to do.

"Darling Harry!" she said. "Why didn't you throw a stone at the window or shout? You stole up like a ghost. And I've been keeping you waiting in the rain! I hope you haven't been here long."

Harry was delighted to play the game this way. He was not quite as quick as she, but on the whole sounder.

"I've only just this second come," he said. "I literally hadn't time to tootle or shout or throw stones. And what sort of afternoon have you had? Did you play a good round?"

He had taken the wind out of Madge's sails with regard to his being kept waiting, and she could scarcely return to that.

"Oh, I didn't play at all," she said. "It has been pouring all the afternoon. I sat by the fire and read the papers from the moment you left me after lunch till now."

"I hope they have been interesting, then," said he.

Madge yawned.

"I can't say they have," she said. "There was nothing whatever in any of them. And there was only *Golf Illustrated* and the *Daily Telegraph*."

"Advertisements contain a lot of humorous stuff sometimes," observed he.

They drove on in silence a little way; the car was running excellently, and they took the long rise up to the Flats on top speed.

"Why, it's the old Bligh," said Madge at length. "I thought we were crawling."

"It's the old Bligh all right," said he, "but we're not crawling at all. She's taking the hill as well as ever the Bertram did."

"You know best, of course," said Madge resignedly, and was silent again.

Really Harry was very annoying; he had entirely refused to be drawn by her having left him waiting in the rain, had even said that he had not been kept

waiting, which was palpably false, as she knew quite well, but, by reason of the way things had gone was unable to tell him. Men were awfully unfair. And he had condemned her to be shut up all the afternoon in that dull, stuffy club-house by his stupid forgetfulness. It was really more than she could stand.

"Harry," she said, "you are really too tiresome. You promised to come over and fetch me if it rained, and it poured, poured, poured, all the time, and you leave me to sit in that stuffy little room the whole afternoon. What have you been doing?"

"I've been finishing up the old Bligh with Alford," he said, "and putting it in working order, as you see. I'm sorry, dear, I quite forgot. It never occurred to me to keep looking out to see if it was raining. I really am sorry."

Madge had a cold, as has been said; she also felt ill-used.

"And what sense there is in your crawling in the dust like a serpent underneath the car——" she began.

"I wasn't. I was standing upright in the pit."

"Well, standing in the pit then, hammering and screwing and covering yourself with dirt and grease. What sense is there in it? You say Alford is a good mechanician; why not let him take things to bits and put them together again?"

"But I happen to enjoy it," he said.

"Oh, then, I understand; you were enjoying yourself, and so you let me spend the whole of this dreadful afternoon in a little pitch-pine room, without taking the trouble to see whether it was raining or not."

"Enjoying a thing is a very good reason for doing it," said Harry. "You enjoy hitting a silly golf-ball into a pit, and then digging at it."

"Oh, that is the war-cry of people who don't care about golf," said she.

"And yours the whine of people who don't care about motors. You don't mind going in them, though, when it happens to be convenient. I take you every day to the links."

"And forget to bring me back. And don't say you are sorry until I remind you."

Harry had remained perfectly imperturbable throughout this; here his quiet smile grew a shade more pronounced.

"I thought it would be rude to change the subject too abruptly," he said, "when you were assuring me that you didn't hear me hoot for you when I came to fetch you."

Madge was silent a moment; then her surface-irritation, which had been considerable, suddenly gave way, and she threw back her head with that little tossing gesture of the chin that was so adorable, and laughed.

"Oh, dear, you've won," she said. "You did it better than I. But I don't for a moment go back on all that I have said apart from that. You are a perfect brute to have been so forgetful, and left me in that awful little hole all the afternoon. I've had a miserable time, and all the papers were fifty years old."

Harry laughed.

"What was the last one you read, dear, that appeared to absorb you so? You turned the page and then looked back again, to make sure you remembered the beginning of the sentence."

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "Harry, I did that rather well."

"Pretty well. I thought it a shade too studied."

Easter had fallen late this year, and they had, with the exception of to-day, enjoyed a fortnight of heavenly spring weather, and hoped for another ten days of it, before Harry had to return to town to take up his Parliamentary work again. They had stumbled upon this cottage, where they were at present, in some magazine dealing with affairs of the country, and had taken it for a month at Easter, and another ten days, should it be still unlet, at Whitsuntide.

It stood high on the heathery uplands north of Byfleet, and though very small, was as much as our young couple wanted. For some reason best known to its builder there was attached to it a big stable with a motor-house, and

that had clinched matters. Harry could bring down both motors, and career wildly all day over the country, while Madge could with less wildness—for she was a very steady player—hit golf-balls "all over"—so Harry expressed it—the excellent links at Woodcombe some six miles away.

It suited them both, in fact, quite admirably, and to each of them, secretly, without communication with the other, had come the delicious day-dream that they might perhaps be able to buy it. They were both Northerners, and both loved the heather and pines of that salubrious place, while the extreme remoteness from any station, where anything that could without irony be called a train stopped, was discounted by the existence of the beloved motors.

Eleven hundred pounds would buy cottage and stable, and the little pocket-handkerchief of a garden that lay between their door and the broad firm sandy road that ran over the top of the Flats. All round them were heather and gorse that came, like a wave ready to break, up to the wire-fence that enclosed them from the open heath, and on stuffy and broiling days in town it would be heavenly to think that at a moment's notice they could run down here, dine in the garden, and wake up in the morning to the freshness that was like that of the moors and the piping of birds.

But for this year, anyhow, all question of purchase was outside the bounds of possibility. Madge in one fit of recklessness had persuaded Harry to take her to Biarritz for a month in the winter, and he, in another, as if to seal and confirm the hopelessness of their financial position, had bought this Bertram car, whereas, really, the old Bligh, as was plain from its admirable conduct this afternoon, was fit for many miles yet.

But motors, as has been said, were a passion of his, and even with the heat and dust of the London summer getting nearer, it was a consolation, when he thought that if he had not been extravagant Woodcombe Cottage might have been theirs, to know that that

beautiful monster was gleaming in the stables.

A train of thought, parallel and corresponding to this, was passing through Madge's mind, as she sat by the fire in her bedroom, for the damp had turned the air chilly, and rested before dinner. Harry, no doubt, had been extremely extravagant over this Bertram, and she remembered, with a little spasm of impatience against him, that only two days ago he had spoken of selling the Bertram again should the old Bligh come up to his expectations, when overhauled, as it had done, and saving up to get a really first-rate car.

That was so like Harry; the old Bligh had been a first-rate car until he had got it, then—also till its arrival—had been the Bertram, but now apparently the Bertram must give way in his mind to something faster and more expensive yet. Harry did not scorch; she did him that justice, but he liked to go very fast indeed when the road was clear.

Personally she did not; she liked to go about eighteen miles an hour, and did not like to go at all unless she wanted to get to some place at the other end of those miles. She regarded motors only as a rather convenient sort of train, which you could order, and which came to the door.

Madge pushed back her hair from her forehead, and poked the fire rather viciously. Harry was incorrigible; if Woodcombe Cottage was to be bought, she must buy it herself somehow. She realized the fairness of that; if they bought it it was for her chiefly that the purchase would be made, so that she could be near these Woodcombe links, which she liked more than any in the country. Often before she had tried motoring down for the day from town and playing, then motoring back, but that double long drive made just the whole difference to pleasure. She had to breakfast early, rush off before Harry was down probably, and in the winter anyhow have a long dark drive home. It was not worth while going down for half the day, which she liked best, whereas here you could go over after lunch and be back for tea. And

what heavenly week-ends they could have!

Yes; she would be the greater gainer of the two, for any place did for Harry so long as there were a good road and a stable, and she cursed her extravagance in having persuaded him to go out to Biarritz for a month in the winter. She had had a windfall last spring in the shape of a legacy, and she would willingly have put down that eight hundred pounds, if Harry would put down three. But Harry was already saving up for the purchase of a "really first-rate car." She would have to squeeze and squeeze to get the extra three hundred, and besides, it wasn't fair that she should pay it all. Harry must take some share in it, and he wanted a new car now!

Madge gave a little shrug of her shoulders, and dismissed the subject from her mind. Whenever she dismissed any subject from her mind, golf instantly and automatically took its place. Perhaps poor old Harry felt about motors as she did about golf, though it was quite inexplicable that he could feel about anything exactly that absorption that she felt.

It was all—all that was possible for a woman, that is to say—within her reach. There were limitations, imposed by her strength, on the length of her drive, but her drive, to do it justice, was usually an admirable performance, except when occasionally she hit the top of the ball, or the county in which she was playing, or looked up very long before she hit it. And all such things were eradicable by taking pains. She had an excellent eye, a quick wrist, and there was no reason why she should not always play a scratch game.

But one did such humiliating things, not from ignorance, but from a sort of innate perversity. All yesterday, for instance, she had been beset by the hideous sin—it seemed no less—of moving her head; she had ruined half the round by doing this with dreadful regularity each time she took her mashie in hand, with the effect that after a good drive or two, as the case might be, she dribbled the ball into a

bunker, lost all the advantage she had already gained, and probably the hole as well.

That sort of thing could be avoided; it need never be done. It was only a question of taking trouble, and heaven knew she was willing to take all the trouble that the world held, if only she could eradicate a fault like that. But it was even as Harry had said; she spent her worthless, if not wicked, days in hitting balls into a pit and then digging them out. That was kind of Harry, for she did not always dig them out.

Putting, too! What horrors she committed, calling them by that hallowed name. She was capable of lying—after a good mashie shot, for once in a way—three or four yards from the hole, and fully believing she was going to get down in one. Instead she would be four feet short after her first put, three feet too strong on her second, and siddle into the hole by some dreadful back door, some curve in the ground she had not observed, in her third! Or determining to be up she would be as far nearly beyond the hole after her first put as she was short of it before.

There again it was only trouble and thought that had to be taken; you had but to hit the ball as you meant, after taking the pains to estimate what you did mean, and you would never take more than two puts on those not very extensive, but admirably true Woodcombe greens.

And then, partly from depression from her cold, partly from the undoubted fact that she had played quite abominably yesterday in a ladies' club-match, and partly from a much more admirable reason than either of these, Madge had a rather dreary quarter of an hour. Her cold was bad, she had been five holes down yesterday, but—and here was the more admirable reason—she had been horrid to Harry today. True he had been tiresome and forgetful, but that did not warrant her ill-temper.

It was golf that got on her nerves and made her like that; till she had taken to the odious game with the seri-

ousness with which she now practised it, it had been a delightful pastime, and what merry times she and Harry used to have playing together. He always played badly, though Willis, the club professional, said he had an excellent style, and could play well if he chose; and, though he never talked when she was on her stroke, often continued talking right through his own, and called the ball names for not being correctly hit. How they used to laugh over it!

Then she had taken seriously to her hobby, making a passion of it, and it would have been no fun, for she improved very rapidly, in playing with her husband now. Nor indeed did he care for it; every outdoor hour at his command he spent in or around a car. Fancy, for instance, spending three whole days over patching up that little rattletrap of a Bligh.

Certainly there was less gaiety in their intercourse than there used to be; they saw little of each other during the day, and when they met he was full of carburetters, so to speak, and she of mashies. No doubt it was partly his fault, but it was assuredly partly hers. Perhaps if she thought a little less about golf, and tried to take a little more interest in his hobby, they might do better.

And at that moment the Great Idea struck Madge, and she sat up with eye rekindled after her depressing reflections. Was she big enough, generous enough to make a reality of it? She hardly knew; for she wanted this cottage very badly.

She went to bed early that night, as she wished to be well enough for another match against the ladies of Bidcombe next day, and she was captaining the side playing against a perfect terror of a woman, who had been in for the ladies' championship. She had not, it is true, proved herself a champion, for she had been dismissed—six down and five to play in the first tie. Still, it argued caliber or confidence, both of which are useful, to have entered at all; but Willis had told her that she had a very good chance of beating this redoubtable Mrs. Parke, if only she

would not put her mashie-shots into bunkers.

But in spite of the fiery ordeal that lay in front of her, she gave but little thought this evening to golf, but gradually drew from Harry the account of this new motor which he was contemplating. This had to be done insinuatingly and carefully, for Harry—the old angel—was, thanks to previous experience, very shy of inflicting motor talk on her. But eventually she got sufficient details; it was a 30-40 car, six-cylindered. The price, too, she got from him; ready to start it cost one thousand pounds. Then she sneezed continuously for a few minutes, and went to bed.

Harry, left alone, lit another pipe and pondered. His pass-book had come in with the post before dinner, and it had been unexpectedly pleasant. Without sailing too near the wind, he found he could put down five hundred pounds toward the new car, and if, as seemed quite possible, he could sell the Bertram for another five hundred pounds, he could reckon the coveted Thornhill as his own. The Bertram should easily fetch that; indeed it might even fetch up to six hundred pounds, for it was still practically new, and there was a tremendous run on the type, and it might not be difficult to find a purchaser who would pay the higher figure in order to get immediate delivery. It had cost him, as it now stood, seven hundred and fifty pounds. To allow for depreciation at one hundred and fifty pounds was quite reasonably liberal. He must talk to Alford about it to-morrow.

There was a somewhat pronounced smell of eucalyptus in the room; Madge was an advocate of disinfectants, and she flooded her pocket-handkerchief with the odious oil, if she had the slightest inclination toward a cold. It had been more than an inclination to-night; smell and taste, poor girl, had both vanished, and all that was left of her voice was an exiguous croaking sound.

Yet she still hoped to play golf to-morrow, and certain it was that she

would unless he, backed by the doctor, absolutely forbade her. He had reserved his right to send for the doctor if she was not much better in the morning, but had promised to take a fair and impartial view of her health. And she would fret so if she could not play; it was strange what a hold the game had got over her.

Harry shifted his position, as if his chair was not quite comfortable. Somehow the last six months had not been a brilliant success; they had been rather full of little frictions and disagreements. His own motor-excursions would have been so delightful if Madge had been with him, but she so seldom had. Whenever there was an off-day in town, she always wanted to be driven out to play golf, and down here it was an established part of the day, as invariable as breakfast or dinner, that he should take her to the links, and either call for her himself or send Alford for her in the other car.

And even when they were together in the evening, though Madge sometimes, as she had done to-night, made violent efforts to appear to be interested in cars, it was hard to talk naturally to her, knowing that she only wanted to appear interested for his sake. At other times, he would throw himself with simulated zest into her golf, and she would say that she played the short thirteenth badly, but got up at the much longer eleventh in two, and holed the put.

Then he would say: "How splendid, darling! That was at the eleventh, was it? Ah!" And be quite unable to think of any other question.

How she loved the game! How childishly happy it made her to play well! But she must not go down from town so often, play the whole day, and come back tired in the evening. For all her physical strength, she easily got overdone. It was a thousand pities that these links, which she loved so, were not nearer town.

Then Harry suddenly got up. "By Jove!" he said. "Ha!" And sat quite silent for a quarter of an hour afterward.

It was within a day or two of the Whitsuntide holidays, and Madge came down to breakfast on her birthday, on a morning of broiling airlessness. For the last week or so she had felt vaguely ill-used; she had seen Harry hardly at all, and when she saw him he seemed to be outwardly preoccupied and inwardly amused. He could give no account of himself; he had been busy, and discouraged detailed questions.

This morning he was late for breakfast, and as she waited, Madge thought over the causes of her disquietude. They had begun some time ago, while they were still at Woodcombe; he had driven her as usual every day to the links, and had called for her again, but he had no motor-talk, no tale of excellent roads or admirable hill-climbing on the part of the car to recount to her, though she had every evening tried to talk "motor-shop." He had nothing to tell her, apparently; he had been "for a bit of a spin," and there was no more.

Then he, too, had been tactful; he had answered her motor-questions with inquiries about niblicks. She had seen through that, she thought; he only asked in order to appear to be interested.

Then he entered, and she wondered if he would remember the fact that it was her birthday.

"Madge, darling," he said, "many happy returns!"

"Ah, thanks," she said. Up till this year he had always bought some little gift for her. Now, it seemed, there was none.

He fumbled at side-dishes.

"I've got a present for you," he said, "but I couldn't exactly bring it. Guess."

"Oh, I can't," said she.

"Well, Woodcombe Cottage. It's yours."

Madge drew a long, deep breath. The thing was so utter a surprise that she could not speak at once.

"Oh, Harry!" she said. "Do you mean you've bought it?"

"Yes, dear."

"But I never heard of anything so

lovely! Oh, how I have longed for it! You mean we can go down there now, and find it's ours?"

"No, not exactly; you must wait till to-morrow, if we want to go there together."

"But why? Let's drive down there this afternoon. Why not?"

"Well, the fact is, I've sold that silly Bertram car, which was never any good, and the old Bligh would take rather long getting there. Let's go down to-morrow by train, and I'll send the Blight on, and it will meet us."

Madge choked with some sudden secret emotion, but quickly recovered.

"It was a bit of mustard," she said.

And with truly masculine stupidity he believed her.

Later in the day, a further bit of birthday present from him to her arrived. The wretch had been playing golf every day for the last three weeks, taking lessons and practising.

"I don't suppose I'm much good, dear," he said, "but we might have a game together when we get down, if it wouldn't bore you."

But all that day Madge, with truly feminine secretiveness, held her tongue about her own affair. They were to start early next morning by train, and she had promised to see to the cab. But just as Harry was getting train-fever, and was looking out of the window, a great car drew up opposite the front door.

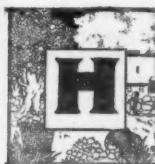
"Why, it's that new build of Thornhill," he said. "I wonder whose it is. Funny, calling at this door."

"No, dear, not very," she said. "It's—it's yours. Oh, come quick, Harry, and we'll have a round before lunch. Darling, I'm not mad. It's yours; and it's got Bosch magneto-ignition, and—and leather-to-metal cone-clutch, and, oh, yes, live axle with torque-rods; I have such a good memory. It's all right; it is really. And, Harry, do beat me at golf. It would be so splendid if you did!"

He did. It was splendid!

The REAL MAYOR of RIDGELAND

By
Elliott Flower



AVING tired of the city, Caspar Crane retired to Ridgeland to spend his old age in peace and comfort. Not that he had reached old age, but he had reached a

point where he could see it with the naked eye; he had wearied somewhat of the turmoil, and it had seemed to him wise to make his escape from the exactions and risks of business, and especially of speculation, while his fortune was still intact. Many a man of advancing years had lingered too long; he decided he would not be one of these.

Crane had speculated conservatively—always conservatively, never risking enough to seriously inconvenience him—but speculation is a fascinating game and, having disposed of his business interests first, he found the fascination growing upon him in the leisure that followed. That was one of the things that hurried him in his decision to escape from the city. He recalled some instances of men who had gone broke after retiring from active business.

A man who is abandoning the city, after a successful career there, usually goes back to the old home, where he knows everybody, but Crane's old home was a village that would not commend itself to anybody who liked comfort. Crane had no desire to get all the way back to nature; he wanted companionship, comfort, and some of the pleasures that are to be found only where men are gathered together in reasonably large numbers.

Ridgeland seemed to answer all the requirements. It was pleasantly lo-

cated, large enough to have a streetcar line, and he and his family already had some acquaintances there. Golf-links, delightful drives, a modest club, and a lake that offered good fishing were additional attractions. His family had spent a summer there, and liked it. So Ridgeland was chosen.

The arrival of a man of the wealth and prominence of Caspar Crane naturally made quite a splash in such a town. No one could say just how rich he was, but he was known to be a good deal more than a millionaire, and the promptness with which he began to spend money was highly gratifying to the local tradesmen and others. He bought a large house, remodeled it, bought a launch, refitted that, bought some saddle and carriage-horses, brought with him two automobiles, and applied for membership in the Ridgeland Merchants' Club and the Ridgeland Golf Club. Also he opened an account with the Ridgeland National Bank that made the officers of that institution look upon him as a most welcome and valuable addition to the population. Then he proceeded to get what enjoyment he could out of his two clubs, his launch, and his automobiles, the horses being for his wife and children.

He had now retired from active business; he was in Ridgeland to lead the simple life—with trimmings, rather elaborate trimmings. Still, it was simple compared with the feverish life of the city. Of course, he had his investments to look after, but he no longer had money in anything that could occasion anxiety. It was merely necessary now to reinvest the money that came to him as securities he held matured—

that is, it would be necessary to do no more than this as soon as he had invested the rather large sum of ready cash that he had on hand. Some of the money received from the sale of his business was still uninvested, and to this was added the money he had received when he closed up his speculative deals.

A comfortable office, a clerk to answer questions and attend to routine matters, and an hour a day of his own time, he reasoned, would be just enough of business to keep his brain from rusting. It was certainly an ideal plan of life for a man in his position. He would keep his money doing something, but always along conservative lines, and under no circumstances would he speculate.

The first problem, of course, was to invest the surplus cash he had on hand.

He was well posted on general security values, as a result of his previous investments and speculations, but it occurred to him that it might be a good plan to invest some of his money locally. The city in which he had residence was surely entitled to the use of a part of his available funds, and, further, this would enable him to keep in closer personal touch with his interests.

President Densmore of the Ridgeland National Bank was naturally glad to give so large a depositor the benefit of his advice. Indeed, President Densmore proved to be a man of such courtesy and sound business judgment that Crane soon found himself consulting him in regard to other than local investments, and they not infrequently lunched together. In consequence, President Densmore knew many of the securities that Crane was carrying, which enabled him to give advice that was not sought. And that is an important detail of this story.

"By the way," remarked Densmore one day, "you can take down a nice little profit on that Colton Manufacturing stock now."

"Rather not," returned Crane. "I'm investing, not speculating."

"Yes, I know," persisted Densmore,

"but I have reason to believe it's higher now than it's ever likely to be again."

"So?" queried Crane.

"Artificial price," explained Densmore. "Stock's good enough, but it isn't worth the present figure. Seems a shame to let a comfortable profit get away."

"It does," agreed Crane, the old spirit strong within him. "I'll take the profit."

After that it was an easy matter to become an occasional seller as well as a buyer of securities. He bought for investment always, buying outright gilt-edge bonds and good dividend-paying stocks that did not fluctuate much in normal times, but he could not resist the temptation to sell when one of these happened to show a sufficiently tempting profit. For one in his position it was a very mild form of speculation, merely incidental to investment; he took the profit, if profit large enough came his way; if not, he held the stock and took the dividends. But it resulted in his usually having a good deal of money seeking reinvestment.

"Why not buy some commercial paper?" asked Densmore, on an occasion when Crane complained that too much of his cash was temporarily idle. "Good commercial paper is as safe as anything you can ask. Of course, from your point of view, it's not as good as something that does not mature so quickly, but it affords temporary use for funds awaiting more permanent investment."

"Not a bad idea," conceded Crane. "Got any more than you want to carry at the bank?"

"I guess we can let you have some," answered Densmore. "As a matter of fact, the town is growing so rapidly in a business way that there's need for more ready cash than is available, and the money you have put in circulation here has been quite a boon to us."

Crane declared that he was glad to help the town in any safe way, and he bought some of the merchants' paper. Then he withdrew some of his funds from the city bank where he still kept an account and bought some more,

and, meanwhile, he was adding occasionally to his other local investments. A little later he placed part of his local business in the hands of a broker that Densmore recommended.

It was all most satisfactory, but he presently awakened to the fact that, instead of having his money invested in stocks and long-term securities that required little attention, he had a good deal of it in short-term notes and mortgages that were constantly maturing, thus necessitating reinvestment. In brief, between his stock sales for profit and the constant turning over of much of the money locally placed, he found himself leading a pretty active business life for a man who had retired. And more and more of his money found local use.

Then the assessor came, and the assessor—any assessor—was a man whom Crane had always cordially hated. This one was particularly objectionable. Ridgeland had just had a great moral awakening on the subject of taxes, with the result that assessors had been scored for their complaisance and tax-dodgers for their dishonesty, and many of those annoying people who are ever interfering were watching closely.

The assessor who called upon Crane, therefore, was not in good humor, and Crane never was in good humor when an assessor called. Crane gave the assessor a lump sum upon which he was willing to be taxed, but the assessor refused to accept any such general statement and insisted upon asking unpleasant questions. This, of course, was most reprehensible in dealing with a man who had done and was doing so much for Ridgeland, but the very fact that he was doing so much seemed to give the assessor the impression that he was worth a whole lot of money.

The result was that, after making many impertinent inquiries as to the contents of safe-deposit boxes, cash in bank, value of specific articles, etc., the assessor just doubled the figure that Crane had given him, and left with the remark that he could apply to the Board of Review for a reduction if he thought he was getting the worst of it.

Crane did apply to the Board of Review. He not only applied for a reduction, but he also applied for the removal of the man who had made all the trouble. The board, however, had itself been an object of criticism, and what it had heard of Crane made the assessor's figures seem to it too low rather than too high. Instead of weakening in the face of his indignation, it virtually put him on the witness-stand to testify against himself, reminding him by various pointed questions of various things that he had overlooked. Then it raised the assessment valuation still higher.

Now, in spite of his desire for the quiet life, Crane had a temper, and it is not soothing to the temper of a man whose importance has been recognized in the city to be thus contemptuously treated in a smaller place. Crane was in a towering passion. Look at what he had done for the town! Half a million dollars of his money was in circulation there, and he could not even secure the discharge of a petty official who had insulted him! Instead, they were actually going to tax him on pretty much all his taxable property! To be thus treated was outrageous, intolerable! The town didn't know when it was well off! It ought to be grateful to him for coming, and it was merely trying to see how much it could make out of him.

He stamped into Densmore's private office, still raging.

"Want to buy any commercial paper?" he asked.

"What's the matter?" inquired the startled banker.

"All that I've got goes on the market—at any price I can get for it."

"My dear Crane," soothed Densmore, "you mustn't do that. Think how it will unsettle things."

"All of it," persisted Crane, "and all my mortgages. I'm going to quit."

"Quit?"

"You can have my house at a bargain—every local interest at a bargain. I'm through with the town! I don't want to own anything in it or ever hear of it again!"

"What is the matter?" asked Densmore. "Why, you can't close out that way, house and everything, without losing a hundred thousand dollars."

"It's worth the price to get away," declared Crane. "I wouldn't stay in such an infernally mean, grasping, and ungrateful town for twice the money! Your public officials here are a set of thieves when they can get hold of a man who has anything! Your assessors are impudent puppies! Your Board of Review is a bunch of insolent highway robbers!"

Then Densmore, at last understanding the situation, tried to reason with him, but Crane would not listen to reason. He had been liberal and accommodating, and this was his reward! Now let the town carry its own financial burden as best it could; he would call every loan that could be called at this time, and he would put everything in the nature of a local security on the market.

Bad news travels fast, especially when it is of a sensational nature, and many of those most immediately interested were quickly apprised of Crane's determination, with the result that a conference was hastily called at Densmore's office. Bell, Crane's broker, was there, and reported that he had already had orders to sell, Crane having gone from Densmore directly to him. President Barton of the Ridgeland Loan and Trust Company came in haste; so did some of the directors of both banks; so also did a number of men whose notes or mortgages Crane held or who were interested in securities that would be affected by his action. Last of all, summoned by telephone, came President Fanning of the Board of Review.

The conference was long and animated, and President Fanning, when he left, carried a little list of names and figures that he consulted thoughtfully. The names were those of some of the town's most prominent citizens, all of whom had a deep financial interest in keeping Crane in good humor, and the figures totaled the tidy little sum of half a million dollars, which sum would have to be raised in cash within twenty-

four hours to take over Crane's securities and prevent the crash that would inevitably follow dumping them on the market, and which sum would be immediately withdrawn from the town. President Fanning thought the other members of the Board of Review might be interested in a subject of such vital importance to the town.

Meanwhile, Crane was trying to reduce his temperature a little by a stroll through his grounds, and one of the thoughts presently occurring to him was that they would not be his own grounds much longer. That was an unpleasant thought, for he had given a good deal of his own time, as well as money, to the task of making them attractive, and—well, yes, he was rather proud of them.

Edith, his daughter, met him, and they strolled along together. This was gratifying, for Edith was less disposed than the others of the family to be glumly resentful when his plans or rules proved vexing. She was a gentle, sweet girl, never aggressive, who ruled in ways distinctly feminine when rule was possible and had the wit to know when it was not.

He told Edith that they were going back to the city—for good.

"Must we?" she appealed, as soon as she had recovered from her surprise.

He answered evasively that he thought it best.

"Why?" she asked.

A simple and natural question, for which he should have been prepared, but it disconcerted him so much that he had no answer. Somehow it was rather difficult to put the reason in convincing words. Indeed, the reason itself seemed strangely weak when he tried to phrase it.

"We've all been so happy and comfortable here," she went on. "Don't you like it?"

Yes, he admitted that he did like it. As a matter of fact—but this he did not say—he was just beginning to realize how very much he did like it.

"Is it a business matter?" she persisted. "Have you lost money?"

"Not yet," he answered grimly, as

he recalled that the loss lay in going away.

"But you may," she interpreted. "Well, what if you do, daddy? It isn't going to be enough to hurt you any, is it? Why measure mere money against happiness? Just let it go and consider that you paid that much for the pleasure of staying here. I'm sure it's worth it."

He made no answer to this. His mind was reasonably busy with the thought that, instead of paying for the privilege of retaining the pleasures of a life that they all, including himself, prized so highly, he was actually planning to sacrifice approximately a hundred thousand dollars for the privilege of giving them up. Looked at in that way, it occurred to him that this was neither good business nor common sense.

"Why," she declared, "if it were left to me, and some one should offer me a hundred thousand dollars to go back to the city to live, I wouldn't go."

Quite innocently she emphasized the sum, and it made him wince.

"Neither would mama," she urged, "nor—nor any of us but you."

This also made him wince, and for the first time in his life he found himself trying to justify himself to one of his children, but this was really because he was trying to justify himself to himself. "It's not a question of money, Edith," he explained. "In fact, it will cost more to go than to stay."

"Then why go?" she demanded, surprised at her own temerity in thus catechizing her father.

"Because I've had a little disagreement with the town itself."

"And so you're going to punish yourself and us. Oh, daddy, don't!"

Again he had no answer ready, because she put it in just the way he was beginning to see it.

"Is it too late to change your plan?" she asked, seeing her advantage in his hesitation.

"No-o." He would not like to have the story of his threatened departure leak out, if he decided to remain, but he knew that Densmore and Bell would

be only too glad to consider the matter confidential in those circumstances.

"Then sit down here," she said, drawing him down beside her on a lawn seat, "and let me tell you how very, very much we all want to stay right where we are."

Never before had he been so weak, even with Edith, but never before had his case been so weak. His frown had already disappeared, and his smile became really warm as she made her points with an engaging seriousness that was also half-playful. At the conclusion he capitulated for a kiss, and she gave him several.

"All right," he agreed, "we'll stay—for the present, at least." He would not make his surrender—which he was grateful to her for compelling—altogether unconditional. "Come up to the house and I'll put a stop-order on the plans by telephone."

He was naturally anxious to reach Densmore and Bell as soon as possible. He called up Densmore first, his purpose being to explain that his family had prevailed upon him to change his mind, but Densmore broke in the moment he recognized Crane's voice.

"By George! I'm glad to get you!" exclaimed Densmore. "I telephoned your house and office two or three times."

"Been on the lake," returned Crane. "Just got in. I wanted to say—"

"Well, it's all right, now that I have found you," interrupted Densmore. "I happened to run across Fanning of the Board of Review and he says you're laboring under a misapprehension."

"A misapprehension?" Crane could hardly believe his ears.

"Yes. He says your case hasn't been disposed of yet, but an informal discussion of it by the board makes it safe to say that the figure you gave the assessor will be accepted. Thought you'd like to know."

"Thank you, yes; it's good news."

Crane turned from the telephone and sank into a chair. "A misapprehension!" he muttered, with a grim smile. "Yes, yes, yes, oh, yes!" And then: "That's a new game that I played un-

consciously, but it looks pretty good. Yes," he repeated reflectively, "it looks pretty good."

II.

John Brierson, promoter and speculator, arrived in Ridgeland one morning, carrying in his suit-case the papers relating to some very elaborate plans—and in his head the details of plans that were still more elaborate. But nothing did he say of either at first.

Very quietly, working through a lawyer of the name of Saylan, Mr. Brierson sought to put himself in a position where he could control the Ridgeland Street Railroad Company. The railroad was not yet a particularly valuable property, although its officers claimed that it had a great future, so Mr. Brierson's task was not difficult. For the most part, the stock was held in small lots, and the fact that the dividends were small, when there were any at all, made the holders quite ready to listen to anybody who offered to take it off their hands at a reasonable price. A desire to show themselves public-spirited citizens had led most of them to subscribe for it, but they had no objections whatever to letting some one else hold it for the possible big profits of the future, said large profits being somewhat too remote to be altogether alluring.

In a little time, therefore, Mr. Brierson and Mr. Saylan, conferring together, discovered that the former was in a position to take control of the road at any time he might desire within a period of ninety days. A little of the stock had been purchased outright, but Mr. Saylan, acting for Mr. Brierson, merely held options on most of it.

And here let it be recorded that Mr. Brierson had not taken Mr. Saylan entirely into his confidence. The lawyer knew that his client wished to secure control of the road, and said client had satisfied him of his financial responsibility, but there the lawyer's actual knowledge ended. He understood in a general way that Brierson was the representative of a syndicate that was buying up and improving minor street-

railway properties that promised ultimate profit on the investment, but concerning this he had no details or corroborative evidence of any kind. In fact, it was largely inference.

Having options on the control, however, Mr. Brierson now uncovered, confidentially, some of the plans in his suit-case, but none of those in his head. Ridgeland, averred Mr. Brierson, was now in a fair way to have such street-car service as it never had had before, but it was necessary to make sure of certain things before the plan could be put in operation. In brief, before taking the control that was now within his reach, Mr. Brierson desired a new and more liberal franchise ordinance, or, at least, definite assurance that he could have one.

Mr. Saylan saw at once that Mr. Brierson was no ordinary man with an ordinary plan. A new and more liberal franchise would immediately enhance the value of the property. It was such a beautiful scheme, if it could be put through, that it was a joke. If he could secure such action, or make sure of it, before his options expired, he would be getting the road for about half its new value when he took control of it. But Mr. Brierson insisted that he was not considering this profit at all.

"The ordinance that I desire," said Mr. Brierson, "is merely to indemnify myself and my associates against loss by a too early termination of our rights. We cannot leave anything to chance; before we put any considerable sum of money into the improvement and extension of this road we must know that we are going to have a reasonable opportunity to get it back. That's no more than ordinary business caution."

An ordinance of the desired character was one of the things that Mr. Brierson happened to have in his suit-case, which certainly showed that "ordinary business caution" was right in his line. He let Mr. Saylan look it over, and Mr. Saylan discovered, among other things, that it extended the franchise for twenty years, and that it had a blanket provision giving the road right to lay tracks on any and all

streets. Otherwise, it differed little from the existing ordinance.

Mr. Saylan was of the opinion that such a franchise could not be secured; the time-extension might be granted, but the blanket provision never would be allowed. Mr. Brierson, however, maintained that he knew more about aldermen and public officials generally than any seven lawyers in Ridgeland, and he insisted upon trying it.

He did—and failed. Both he and Saylan sounded everybody from the mayor down, and it was a frost. None of the officials could see just where the blanket provision was going to be detrimental to the interests of the town, but they would give no one any such iron-clad monopoly, and the very fact that that was the one provision upon which Brierson insisted most strenuously made them the more suspicious of it. He would accept a shorter franchise, but it must be provided that no one else could lay a track upon any street; they would give him the full twenty years, but they would not agree to the other condition.

Then Mr. Brierson gave up in disgust, realizing that even money could not put an ordinance through in the face of such unanimous opposition to his pet clause.

Mr. Saylan, marveling much that his client should be so afraid of competition where competition seemed so entirely out of the question, was still mindful of his duty as a lawyer, and now suggested that it *might* be worth while to see the real mayor.

"The what?" exclaimed Brierson. "Why, I've just been talking to—"

"The mayor *de jure*, but not the mayor *de facto*."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Caspar Crane, and every time he sees red the town goes right up in the air."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, it started when we tried to assess him on something like the real value of his taxable property," explained Saylan. "He gave a war-whoop and announced that he was going back to the city on the first train.

So we let him name his own assessment valuation. Then we ordered some granite-block pavement where he wanted asphalt, because of his automobiles, and we gave him asphalt. A little later we closed a street that interfered with his plans for extending his grounds. Next we selected a site for the new library in accordance with his desires, his objection to the site originally chosen being that it was inconvenient for him and his family."

Mr. Brierson's interest was beginning to border on enthusiasm. "That's certainly doing pretty well," he declared. "Anything more?"

"Well, he decided that he wanted his son to get a little practical experience in political and municipal affairs, so we've been putting the boy through the city hall very much as a man might put his son through his own mercantile establishment for the purpose of teaching him the business."

"What's the answer?" asked Mr. Brierson.

"Why, Crane has more loose money in Ridgeland than any other three men," explained Saylan. "Most of our merchants have found his money mighty convenient at one time or another, and a good many of them are doing business on it now. When we do anything that annoys him, he just telephones an order down to dispose of his local holdings and call his loans, and then we immediately promise to be good."

"Why didn't you tell me about him before?" demanded Brierson.

"I didn't think of it. Fact is, you can't buy his influence, anyhow."

"Don't you believe it," retorted Brierson. "Watch me!"

Very tactfully and cautiously did Brierson go about his task. And he was lucky. Crane already knew that some one was trying to buy the Ridgeland Street Railroad Company, and it was a matter of regret to him that his knowledge was limited to this general fact. He had retired from active business, of course, being now merely occupied in watching his investments, but he did hate to feel that he was to have

no slice of a melon that was being cut right under his very nose.

Naturally, then, he was unconsciously ready for Brierson when the latter came, and there was certainly nothing coarse about the latter's methods. He met Crane, not as a man seeking an introduction, but in a casual way, and he met him several times before the street railroad was even mentioned.

Then it was mentioned merely incidentally, as something that was already showing a good profit for those who got in at the right time and that promised to show a much better one later. Crane was attentive, but he intimated significantly that he always liked to get into a deal on the ground floor. Brierson was sorry, but there was no chance just then. Perhaps, later, if some one happened to drop out—

Well, strangely enough, some one did happen to drop out, and Crane was allowed to come in. Furthermore, so cleverly had Brierson played his hand that Crane displayed less than his usual caution. He was allowed to take over this small block of stock at the price originally paid for it, which possibly blinded him to the fact that he was going into a deal without any very definite knowledge of the details. Brierson, it may be well to mention, had really passed on to him the only stock for which he—Brierson—had had to pay cash, retaining only the options. But he was in. He very likely would have refused to come in had he known the exact situation and what was expected of him, but he was in, and a man will do many things to protect his interests that he would not do otherwise.

Nevertheless, Brierson waited a few days before explaining the situation. Then he told him there was a hitch with the extension ordinance. Crane could not understand it, and Brierson showed him the objectionable clause.

"But we don't need that," said Crane.

"Yes, we do," insisted Brierson.

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Crane. "Ask for what streets we need and let it go at that. Nobody but an insane man would try to put another street-car line

in this town, especially if we give them the extensions and improved service that we must give to make the thing pay."

"Oh, it looks safe enough," admitted Brierson, "but my people want to be absolutely sure. If nobody else wants to come in, there's no reason why we should not have that clause."

"And no reason why we should," retorted Crane. "Why, Brierson, I'd balk at that clause myself, if I were in the council."

"But some of the money for this deal can be had on no other terms," explained Brierson. "This town needs a really up-to-date street-car line, with a park or two on the outskirts to make business. That kind of a line can be made to pay, but it takes money, and money likes to play safety. We've got to have that clause. I've tried and failed, but it occurred to me that you might be able to do better."

Crane ignored this hint. He was alert now, and there was something about the proposition that puzzled him. "Do you mean to say," he demanded, "that success depends upon this clause?"

"So much so," replied Brierson, "that the man who can put it through can have a much bigger piece of the pie at ground-floor rates."

"What's back of this, Brierson?" asked Crane sharply.

"Why, I've already told you—"

"No, you haven't." The venture was assuming a new importance in Crane's eyes, and he could see about as far as any one when he got his eyes fairly open. "I went into it blindly, because it looked pretty good as a general proposition, but the way you stick to that blanket clause makes all your talk about extensions and improvements and parks look like so much rot. I want to know the inside—the real inside—before I go in any deeper."

Brierson was being led on, as he had expected, but he wished to uncover no more than was necessary to secure Crane's cooperation. It might easily happen that the cost of that cooperation would be in proportion to the magnitude of the deal and the certainty of

profit, so it was the part of wisdom to say as little as possible.

"The better our franchise," said Brierson, "the better the price we can get for our property."

"Oh, that's it!" exclaimed Crane.

"Whoever gets the road," Brierson went on, "will naturally have to give the promised improvements, but the extent of the possible immediate profits lies in the liberality of the ordinance we now get. The stock has advanced a good deal already, and the right kind of an ordinance ought to send it to a premium."

"Then it's a speculation and not an investment—we're buying to sell and not to operate," remarked Crane. "I didn't look into this very closely before. What else?"

Brierson looked at him in surprise.

"Oh, that isn't all," insisted Crane. "For pushing up the price of stock the extension of the franchise is the most important detail, and you care less about that than you do about the blanket clause. What's the explanation? You can't expect anything from me unless I know what I'm doing."

"And then?" queried Brierson.

"That depends. I'm in, and I never was much on backing out of a game that's any good."

A gleam of satisfaction shot from Brierson's eyes. Crane's influence might come high, but he was at least sure of it now, and he uncovered the last detail, the real secret. "Ridgeland," he said, "figures on the map of the Northern Electric Traction Company as a division terminal."

"What!" exclaimed Crane. "Why, they don't come within fifty miles of here."

"They're coming," asserted Brierson. "They've added ten millions to their capital, and this corner of the State is their next point of invasion. Only a few of us know, but you bet we do know, and we're here first. I'm violating a confidence in telling this, even to you, but I want you to understand the situation." He leaned forward and emphasized his remarks by pounding the palm of one hand with his other

fist. "Ridgeland is absolutely necessary to their plans; they've got to have it. Put this franchise ordinance through, and they can get it only by buying our road at our price. They can get through, or even into, the town in no other way. It's worth considering, isn't it?"

"Yes," Crane agreed thoughtfully, "it's worth considering. Give me until to-morrow to consider it."

The next morning, when Brierson called, he was ready to talk business. His plan was made, and he was so sure of success that he insisted upon taking options on some more of the stock, even at a higher price, and he also bought some outright. Brierson went in with him on this, for Brierson, being compelled to share some of his options with Crane, found it necessary to get some more stock within reach in order to assure himself of control.

Then Crane insisted upon certain changes in the proposed ordinance, in the hope that it might be made to look more acceptable. He reduced the time to ten years, as Brierson had previously offered to do, and he inserted a compensation clause. Brierson was constitutionally opposed to compensation clauses, but, as the company to which they intended to sell would have to pay, he decided that they could afford to be liberal in this case.

"Now," said Crane, "see what you can do with it in this form. Perhaps there won't be any fuss about it now. You might suggest that I am interested, but don't say any more than that."

It occurred to Brierson that he had not let Crane in merely to advise as to the construction of the ordinance, and that he would be paying a pretty stiff price for advice if no more than that were necessary. However, he went ahead—and failed. The blanket clause was still the stumbling-block. It might be all right—the aldermen interviewed could not see just wherein it was going to make trouble—but it was surely open to suspicion. Anyhow, no alderman was ready to vote for such a franchise. In view of this, it had seemed useless to even talk to the mayor this time.

"Nothing doing," Brierson reported to Crane in the latter's office. "It's up to you."

"All right," returned Crane, reaching for his hat in haste. "I'll show 'em! Did the best I could to make it easy for them, but I thought likely they wouldn't have any more sense."

"Where you going now?" asked Brierson.

"Home," was Crane's surprising answer. "I'm going home to wait for them."

"To—to—what?"

But Crane, his hat pulled down in a way that indicated both determination and displeasure, had already left.

He did one errand on the way home, and, as a result of this errand, he was shortly followed by a wagon containing two men and a big "For Sale" sign—the biggest that he could find. The men put up the sign in the front yard, and Crane watched them from the porch. His daughter and his wife came to him in great perturbation, but he waved them away.

Sensational news travels quickly, and the fact that Caspar Crane's house was for sale was sensational news, meaning much to Ridgeland. In consequence of certain previous experiences, the leading men of Ridgeland did not have to be told how much it meant.

There were telephone inquiries; then men began to arrive in haste. To some of these Crane had little to say, but with others he held earnest conferences on the porch. There seemed to be much argument on the one side, and merely stubborn determination on the other, in these conferences, but they all ended with resigned acquiescence on the part of the men doing the arguing, although some of them first did a little telephoning themselves.

Then, at last, Crane called the gardener. "Take down that sign," he ordered, "but store it away somewhere. I may want to use it again."

And the telephone carried the news to Brierson that the desired ordinance would be passed at the next meeting of the council.

III.

Fortunate is the man, and especially the young man, who finds that pleasure and business both lie in the same direction. Joe Chandler was fortunate. He was sent to Ridgeland on a business mission, and Edith Crane lived in Ridgeland. He had known Edith in the city; he had known her so very well that their parting, when she left, had been close to a heart-breaking affair, and it might easily have been altogether heart-breaking had it not been for the consoling reflection that Ridgeland was near enough to permit of his running up there occasionally.

He had "run up there" occasionally, but railroad-tickets cost money, business is exacting, and he had been unable to make the trip with anything like the frequency desired. Now, however, he was in Ridgeland for an indefinite stay at another's expense. Could anything be better than that?

Naturally, he went to see Edith the first thing. He arrived in town in the evening, and he could not well take up his business mission until the next morning, so there was no earthly reason why he should not go to see Edith the first thing. Perhaps he would have gone, anyhow, business or no business, but it is unnecessary to consider that point, for the circumstances were such that he could do it without in any way neglecting his client's interests.

Edith was just as glad to see him as he was to see her, and the evening was most enjoyable. They went for a row on the lake, strolled through the grounds, and brought up finally at one of the rustic benches near the house. It was altogether delightful, the more so because of the prospect of other evenings to follow.

"And you don't have to go right back," said Edith, when they finally awakened to the fact that it was time for him to return to his hotel. "It seems almost too good to believe."

"I'll be here several days—perhaps several weeks—I don't know just how long," he answered.

"But we'll make the most of it," she

decided. "We'll have long walks and drives and boat-rides, and—and—oh, it's going to be lovely to have you for several days."

"But—but I'm here on business," he faltered.

"Oh, of course," she agreed. "How stupid of me! You'll have to give some time to business, won't you? Can you get through by ten o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"I'm afraid not," he answered, regretful but smiling. "I don't really know how much of my time my business is going to take, but I am very much afraid it's going to be a good deal. I'll know better when I get started on it to-morrow."

"Tell me about it," she urged, interested in anything that interested him.

"It would take too long," he pleaded, "and I think you'd find it mighty dull and dry." But, his thoughts being thus turned to business, a disquieting possibility occurred to him. "Did you ever hear your father speak of John Brierson?" he asked.

"Never."

He was relieved. "I'm glad of that," he said. "Brierson is trying to put through a scheme that calls for a good bit of money, and I'd hate to see your father in it. Hardly likely, but it just struck me as a possibility that, if he wanted local capital, he might get after your father."

"Oh, daddy's been too busy quarreling with the town to do anything else," she laughed. "He was so mad about something that he put a 'For Sale' sign up in the yard a few days ago, but some men came up here and smoothed it over."

"Well, I'm glad Brierson hasn't got hold of him," he remarked. "If you ever hear him mention Brierson, why, you just tell him to let the man alone. It would be mighty awkward— But our time is too precious to talk business," he concluded abruptly, and business was straightway forgotten.

The next morning, pursuing his investigations, he discovered that his momentary fear of finding himself in an awkward position was more than justi-

fied. Edith might never have heard her father mention John Brierson, but the business men of the town knew that the aforesaid John had succeeded in interesting Caspar Crane in his Ridgeland Street Railroad deal. This was all the more a subject of comment because Crane was the only local man who had been taken in, although there were still other local stockholders who had been incidentally benefited by the advance in the price of the stock.

The business men of the town also knew that Brierson, instead of buying the stock outright, had merely secured ninety-day options on most of it, and they knew that the city council had hastily passed a new franchise ordinance that was extraordinarily liberal, but those that Chandler saw did not know just how the passage of that ordinance had been secured.

"That was probably Crane's work," they said. "Somehow, this town does just about what he tells it to do."

The situation certainly seemed to be desperate. He was in Ridgeland to circumvent Brierson, if possible, and he could do that only by antagonizing the father of his sweetheart. At best, he had small chance of winning—one little incidental item of news that reached his ears gave him faint hope—and to try that chance meant to jeopardize his own and Edith's happiness by incurring the wrath of her father.

"Unless," he reflected, "I can get him to pull out first. I wonder whether he's in too deep for that. If I could—if I could—it would work two ways; make me all right with Crane and jar Brierson so his teeth would rattle."

He decided to try it, and it was characteristic of him to play boldly and to the limit of his ability when he had once decided upon the best move.

Crane was not at his office—he was seldom there except for a short time in the morning—so Chandler went to the house, where he was given a greeting so cordial that he found it difficult to mention business. Even the maid was surprised when he asked for Mr. Crane, and Crane himself thought that some mistake had been made.

"Glad to see you, Joe," he said. "I heard you were here last evening, but you didn't seem to be looking for me, and I guess the maid made a mistake this time. I'll call Edith."

"No," interposed Chandler quickly. "I want to see you, Mr. Crane."

Crane looked surprised; then he smiled comprehendingly, and wondered just what a father ought to say when a most acceptable young man asked for his only daughter. It was a good deal out of Crane's line, and he had nothing to guide him except his knowledge of the way stage fathers carried themselves in similar situations. He thought they were usually rather silly about it, too.

"Business, I suppose," he laughed.

"Yes, it's business."

"We didn't look upon such matters as business in my younger days," remarked Crane, in jocular tone.

"But this is business," insisted Chandler. "I came to see you about the Brierson street railroad deal."

"What about it?" asked Crane quickly.

"I understand that Brierson has got you into it."

"What if he has?" Crane's tone and manner had become businesslike; he rather resented interference by a young man in an affair of this kind.

"Why, as your prospective son-in-law—"

"Who said you were my prospective son-in-law?"

"I did."

"Oh!"

"And Edith."

"Then I presume it's all settled." He was ready to have it all settled a moment before, but the interview was not following the course he had expected.

"We hope so."

"You're bringing it to my attention in an unusual way," remarked Crane, "but," he added, "I find something to admire in your originality and nerve."

"I should have brought it to your attention in the conventional way—a little later," explained Chandler. "It's because I intended to do this that I have been led to speak to you of the

Brierson deal; otherwise, I should have said nothing."

"Oh, very well," agreed Crane, now curious and amused. "As my prospective son-in-law, what about the Brierson deal?"

Chandler found cause for elation in this indirect acceptance of his claim, but he held to his main purpose. "I strongly advise you to draw out of it," he said.

"Why?"

"For two reasons; first, it would be unfortunate for men in our relative positions to be opposed to each other in such an ugly fight as this promises—"

"Oh, you're with the Northern Electric Traction Company, are you?" interrupted Crane.

"Our firm is employed as counsel."

"Then, if it promises to be so unpleasant, why don't you draw out?"

"Because we're on the right side," answered Chandler confidently. "Besides, this is only one detail of a tremendous lot of business, involving the extension of the Northern Electric lines pretty much all over the State. And we're going to win."

Crane found this effrontery so amazing that it was a joke; he was tempted to laugh, but he only said: "All right; go ahead."

"You mean," returned Chandler eagerly, "that it will make no difference with—with—"

"None at all," declared Crane generously. "This is business, and I'll be tickled to death to get a man who can beat me in a business deal into the family. But you can't do it—not in this town, anyhow. Go ahead and earn your fees, but you can't do it. Why, I'm the real mayor of this town. What's your other reason?"

"The dishonesty and treachery upon which the whole deal is based. You play the game hard, but I know you play it according to the rules. This hasn't been played that way."

"How is that?"

"The information that the Northern Electric intended to make Ridgeland a division terminal in the extension of its interurban lines came from a traitor

in the directorate who went in with Brierson and some others to clean up some dirty money at the expense of his own road and his own associates. He was found out, all right, and dropped from the board, but it was too late to head the thing off as effectively as we would like."

"Rather!" commented Crane. "But are you sure of your facts?"

"Absolutely."

Crane, as Chandler had said, played the game hard, but he played it according to the rules. He would take any advantage that the rules gave, and might even stretch them a little, but deliberate treachery was hateful to him. At the same time, he did not feel that he was called upon to sacrifice his own interests because of something that had been done previously and for which he was in no way responsible. After a moment of reflection he said so.

"Too late," he declared. "I'm in; we've got everything clinched, and I'm going to see the thing through. Go ahead with your fight. I'm curious to see what you'll do."

"Head off the ordinance, possibly," suggested Chandler.

"The council has already passed it."

"But the mayor hasn't signed it."

"The mayor will."

"He's taking a pretty long time about it."

True, he was. Crane knew that this was the one weak spot, but he had ample reason to believe that his influence would go as far with the mayor as it had with the council. Unfortunately, it had not occurred to him that the mayor might prove recalcitrant when he secured the acquiescence of the council, and he was quite hopeful, even yet, that the mayor would not compel him to resort to drastic measures again. But he might. The situation would bear watching.

Crane watched and investigated, which was more unfortunate for Brierson than for Chandler. He learned that Chandler had a long conference with the mayor, then one equally long with Densmore, and then another shorter one with the mayor, after which he left

town. Incidentally, he had one or two "conferences" with Edith, but they didn't count in a business way, of course. Very likely he learned from the mayor and Densmore just what his —Crane's—hold was on the town, but what good would that do him? It was no secret.

All in all, Chandler disturbed him very little, but what he learned about Brierson, in the course of his general investigations, disturbed him a good deal. And, if he had only known it, Brierson himself was much troubled. Brierson wanted Crane "to put the screws on the mayor," as he expressed it, but he deemed it unwise to urge this too strongly, for Crane, when first approached on the subject, had curtly reminded him that mere lapse of time would make the measure a law without the mayor's signature, provided there was no veto. But the possibility of a veto made him impatient and anxious.

So he was very glad to see Crane when the latter finally came to him. He thought that Crane was at last ready to bring pressure to bear on the mayor, but the purpose of the visit proved to be entirely different.

"Brierson," said Crane, and his tone showed that he was in no pleasant frame of mind, "I always did hate to be left holding the bag."

"What do you mean?" asked Brierson.

"It has come to my knowledge," declared Crane, "that you and your associates are carrying hardly a single share of this stock. You passed it all over to me."

"You wanted it," remarked Brierson.

"I wanted to come in on even terms with the rest of you," said Crane, "but you are carrying options, while I am carrying about all the cash stock that it was necessary to purchase. It isn't a fair division, Brierson. If the deal falls through, I'm saddled with a whole lot of stock that never has paid decently, some of which was acquired at a pretty stiff figure, while you can step out with a trifling loss by merely letting your options expire without buying."

"My dear Crane——"

"That's all right, Brierson; don't try to explain or you'll make the thing worse. Stock's all right as an investment, but I prefer options, when I can get them, in a deal of this kind. I'll take options, Brierson, and you can relieve me of the stock."

"All of it?"

"All of it," asserted Crane doggedly. "I'd have been willing to carry my share of the burden, but you put it all on me, and now you can take it all off."

"And if I do," queried Brierson, "will you put the screws on the mayor? Until he signs there is always danger of a veto, you know."

"I'm watching that," said Crane, "and—— Well, yes, I will, unless I get a mighty favorable report from his office by to-morrow. I know pretty well what's happening there, but there is a risk in waiting."

"I'll take the stock," agreed Brierson.

"And I'll watch you after this, Brierson," was Crane's disagreeable rejoinder.

The very fact that his associate had thus tried to take advantage of him made him the more anxious to close up the deal and get out of the combination at the earliest possible moment, and the news that came from the mayor's office added to this desire. There were many indications that the mayor's backbone was stiffening. No reason for this could he discover, except that Chandler had been there twice; and that was really no reason at all. Nevertheless, the mayor had dropped one or two remarks that seemed to point to a possible veto.

That settled the matter for Crane, and he had the big "For Sale" sign brought out and put up on the lawn again, after which he retired to the porch to await results. He had educated the town of Ridgeland, and it was no longer necessary to go to any personal inconvenience to explain what this meant.

It created the usual sensation, but not the usual result. The people who saw it hastened away in the direction of the

business district, but no one came to ask why he was selling. To gain his point he must be able to explain what had disgusted him with the town, so that word could be passed to the man who alone was in a position to mollify him, and no one sought an explanation. There had been no hitch in this program before, but now there was one.

He waited an hour—two hours—three hours, and still no one came. Edith joined him on the porch, but even she did not seem to be greatly disturbed this time. She merely asked how long he was going to leave the sign up.

"Forever," he answered irritably.

"I wish Joe would come back," she sighed. "He promised me he'd break you of this habit. Of course, I know by this time that it doesn't really mean anything, but it's dreadfully annoying."

That didn't improve his temper. It was beginning to look very much as if he might have to make his threat good, and he did not want to do it.

"Joe is so clever," she rambled on. "He says he's playing a business-game with you, and I know you want him to win. You just want to see how smart he is, don't you?"

"Oh, run away——"

"Why, there he comes now!" she cried.

She ran to meet him, and it was well that she gave him cordial greeting, for something was needed to relieve the chill of Crane's welcome.

Chandler glanced at the "For Sale" sign and smiled whimsically. Crane was quick to note that it did not seem to disturb him in the least.

"I'm afraid that won't do any good this time," remarked Chandler, with a nod toward the sign. "The mayor has vetoed the street-car measure."

"He has!" Crane sprang to his feet. "I'll show him! I'll make this town see blue! I'll have it applying for a receiver! I'll make money so scarce here that they won't know how a ten-dollar bill looks! Just let me get to the telephone!"

"I don't believe that's necessary," interposed Chandler. "If it's merely a

matter of disposing of your local holdings, I'll take them."

"You'll what?"

"I'll take them. If you have any doubt of my ability, you might telephone Densmore and ask about the letter of advice he has received with regard to honoring my drafts."

Crane sank back in his chair, mouth open and eyes staring.

"The Northern Electric," Chandler went on, "has authorized me to take over your local interests and carry them until they can be disposed of without unsettling conditions here. We can fix the matter up very quickly. Of course, you can't expect to unload everything in a lump and get full value, but—"

"I don't believe I care to sell," said Crane weakly, his eyes wandering over his beautiful grounds and the shaded, pleasant street beyond.

"Isn't he just the cleverest boy, daddy?" cried Edith jubilantly.

Crane did not reply.

"And I would suggest," Chandler added, "that you take down the sign. With all this money at my command, I might be tempted to buy. It would be a good speculation."

"Edith," said Crane, "tell John to take that sign down and burn it up."

"But, daddy," persisted Edith, "isn't he—now isn't he—just the cleverest boy?"

"Oh, yes," conceded Crane grimly, "he is." Then, suddenly, there came the glimmer of a smile, which quickly broadened, and finally ended in a hearty laugh. "By George!" he exclaimed. "It has just occurred to me that that scoundrel Brierson is left holding the bag, anyhow." It was such a joke that he forgot his own discomfiture.



IN FEBRUARY

MAIDENS fair with eyes devout
Don their veils and hurry out.
Soft! What can they be about,
In February?

Never ask them to delay
If they run to kneel and pray,
If they seek new hearts this day
In February.

Follow now their flying feet.
Who is this they run to meet?
Who the stranger laughing greet
In February?

Are these roses on the snow
That they gather as they go?
Nay—they're picking hearts, I trow,
In February.

Who, then, is this pedler Jack,
Crying: "Maidens, what d'ye lack?"
Scattering hearts from out his pack
In February?

Have you guessed, sweetheart of mine,
That they welcome Valentine?
Thief! He stole your heart and mine
Last February!

TORRANCE BENJAMIN.

THE DEFERRED PROPOSAL

*By George
Lee Burton*



ELL, where *did* you get that necklace?"

"It was a present from Cousin Parthenia."

"How lovely! Such magnificent diamonds! An heirloom?"

"Not exactly, but cousin had it when she was a girl. I can't decide whether she gave it to me as a reward of merit or as a consolation prize."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you some time, Betty; it is a long story."

"Tell me now, dear; the other diners won't be here for half an hour."

"Well, if we have half an hour. You know she had me up recently for a long visit. She had not worn the necklace for years; said she could not bear to wear it upon black velvet now, when as a girl she used to wear it about her neck with evening gowns. 'And no thin old lady over sixty should wear décolleté gowns and diamond necklaces, my dear,' she was wont to observe."

"So she selected you as a proxy?"

"Cousin Parthenia has ideas of her own. She had decided that this would be a beautiful wedding-present, but that such diamonds should not be wasted. 'They should go, Nell, to some one who has social skill; I hope you have, but you must prove it on this visit. I wish you to be always—always, remember—completely mistress of the situation and a credit to me.' 'I'll try, cousin, if you will only teach me,' I responded, with eyelids first fluttering down and then raised as I looked wistfully at her before breaking into a laugh; at which the old lady smiled grimly and actually patted my cheek. 'You have possibili-

ties,' she finally replied, dropping her lorgnette."

"Encouraging."

"Quite; but cousin's ideas did not end there. The dear soul proceeded to probe my heart, and finding it normal but empty promptly decided upon a matrimonial prize to go with the necklace. She loves a love-affair, although she herself has never married. 'I want you near me, Nell,' she said. 'Let me see; you shall have Rossiter Doan. He is the handsome son of the most desirable parents I know, charming persons in every way, who have already settled a small fortune upon him.'

"Oh, Nell, are you engaged to him?"

"I'm telling you the whole story, my dear."

"Let me see your rings—don't hide them in that fashion. Then hurry, if you positively *will* not let me see."

"Do I *have* to marry him, cousin?" I asked meekly. 'Not if he doesn't ask you,' she replied; 'but you must not crudely lead him on and fracture his heart if you don't wish him. A really artistic flirt should be able to keep a man at such a distance that he will not needlessly sacrifice himself.' 'Yes'm,' I responded submissively."

"Your Cousin Parthenia was something of a belle when she was young, wasn't she?"

"Father said she was a wonder, though a trifle acid now."

"Did that end the discussion?"

"Almost. I suggested to cousin that he might not care for me, to which she replied: 'Fiddlesticks! Do you suppose I've spent a lifetime seeing persons socially without learning anything of human nature? I know he will like you just as well as I know the color

of your hair. He, too, is likable and handsome, fascinatingly handsome, the girls say."

"Was he really?"

"The handsomest man that ever liked me."

"Handsomest man you ever *saw*?"

"No, that ever liked me."

"That's quite the same thing."

"You delightful fraud!"

"What was his style?"

"He suggested the Italian type, with hair and eyes and beautiful heavy eyebrows that just escaped being black and contrasted splendidly with the dark, slender oval face and clear-cut features. He stood about the regulation six feet, with enough flesh to make him lithe and muscular instead of merely thin. When he talked or laughed, the light in his eyes and his gleaming white teeth gave the finishing touch. He is really most attractive."

"Did you accept him on account of his magnetic beauty, Nell?"

"Don't anticipate; I'm telling you the story."

"Was he quite perfect?"

"To be candid, Betty, he was rather too perfect, except his eyes; you felt somehow that he lacked strength. My first impression was that he had dishonest eyes; I think I should have accepted him at once if I could only have believed in his eyes."

"What do you mean?"

"They always seemed so shifty and insincere; not quite always, but I got into the habit of looking for the expression and usually found it there."

"Perhaps that was merely imagination; you happened to get that impression at first, and afterward saw what you were looking for."

"No. As old Mrs. Crest says, 'Nature doesn't always hang out danger-signals over a face,' but she certainly did in Mr. Doan's case."

"Did other persons notice it?"

"They did not say so; he isn't a criminal, Betty; but I think any observant person must have seen."

"I'm afraid you misjudged him, Nell."

"I think not; I was careful. You

know that a girl visiting in a strange place is at a disadvantage and that Cousin Parthenia would naturally be prejudiced in his favor; so I early established friendly relations with Mrs. Crest, one of those delightful old ladies who go everywhere and know everybody from the grandfathers down, and who dearly love to talk. She was a most valuable source of information, and I was constantly on the alert for little indications of character."

"Did he know it?"

"Do you think I am absolutely stupid?"

"How soon did he propose, Nell?"

"Not as soon as he wished."

"What?"

"I postponed that. The evening I first met him I happened to hear him express himself against a rejected suitor's trying again. 'No man should ask a second time,' he said. 'Girls are usually too frivolous in thinking of such matters, and should never be encouraged in flippancy by an encore.'"

"How silly!"

"Wasn't it? A girl may not know her own mind, or may be mistaken about possibilities; there may be a dozen reasons. However, I liked him so much that I decided not to risk it, but to defer the proposal until I was quite sure of myself."

"How could you? As if you were the one who proposed!"

"Scarcely; but I wished to be a credit to Cousin Parthenia, and I quite agree with her that a woman ought always to control the situation; it is the woman's right."

"Which she doesn't always get."

"Then it is her own fault, and she doesn't deserve it."

"Did you see much of him?"

"Of course; trust Cousin Parthenia for that. He was one of a half-dozen carefully selected dinner-guests she asked informally the next evening, and she saw that we were all invited to Mrs. Crest's golf-tea the next afternoon. Numerous other 'small and earlies,' with a week-end at the Martsons' and some calls he seemed disposed to pay, made us old acquaintances in ten days."

"With what result?"

"That I liked him, and his attention did not seem to be an effort. In fact, he began to intimate a warmth of heart."

"How?"

"In addition to being on hand whenever wanted, accepting all invitations and giving as many more, he allowed his deep black eyes to look admiration, and his smile became frank and engaging instead of perfunctory. He smiled as if he were enjoying himself, and the gleam of white beneath the red lips, added to the flash of interest in his eyes, made him strikingly attractive. But he made a crude mistake early in the game."

"What, Nell?"

"At the golf-links one afternoon, when the air was particularly springy with a spicy tang and yet a suggestion of warmth, something was said about that story we were speaking of yesterday where the hero falls in love with Jane at first sight. 'I don't think that's natural,' Mr. Doan remarked, 'for a man to keel over into the depths of love at the drop of a hat; do you?' 'Really, Mr. Doan,' I replied, 'how can I say? What does a girl ever know about the workings of a man's mind or heart? She sees results and guesses; but you ought to know!'"

"His reply?"

"I think I know," he said, "but perhaps I am too inexperienced, for I myself have never yet loved." His look and smile while speaking put me on my guard, for they suggested that he wished me to believe him, yet enjoyed the remark as a merry jest. He waited expectantly for a response. "How strange!" I answered softly. "With men it is usually a procession of heart-affairs, ending at the altar."

"Why, Nell!"

"You know it is, Betty. 'With some that may be true,' he acknowledged in a candid voice, although there was no corresponding candor in his eyes, 'but you don't know me. You have never visited here before, I believe. I have met many charming girls, but never cared for any of them in this—in that

—way.' The slip was so well done it almost deceived even me, Betty. 'I believe in keeping the throne of affection for one alone,' he continued, 'the one, no matter how long the period of waiting.'"

"Dear me, did you feel superfluous?"

"No, for he managed to intimate in look and tone that perhaps after all—perhaps—he was about to discover the long-awaited. It had a tendency to make him seem more desirable, and his dark handsome face was full of magnetic attraction, with his eyes flashing and his white teeth gleaming as he smiled. But Betty, he was twenty-seven if a day; that type of man and 'never loved'! It was an insult to my intelligence, even if he thought I had never visited there before."

"Don't be too hard upon him, Nell."

"It was a gratuitous falsehood, Betty; I felt it so at the time. Later I sought out Mrs. Crest and proceeded to investigate his record. 'How often has he been engaged?' the dear old lady repeated. 'I don't know; let me count. There was Isabel Crane; that lasted one winter, but she afterward married and went South. Lily Senter was the next; he was devoted to her for two years, but I don't think they were engaged that long; she afterward married Louis Gant. The last was Vivian Johnston; a nice girl, too; but he seemed to grow tired, and that's been all off for months.'"

"Mrs. Crest must have been equivalent to a card-index."

"She was most valuable. 'Why? Do you wish him, my dear?' she ended abruptly, peering at me through her eye-glasses. 'I don't know, yet,' I responded; 'but I should like to see his former taste in adorables. Can't you get me a glimpse of their photographs, without letting any one know?' At which the old lady looked at me shrewdly, then laughed. 'Yes, I think I can. My niece has one of Isabel which I can slip away; and I know Mrs. Senter so well that I can easily abstract Lily's photo the next time I call. But Vivian; let me see; how can I get Vivian's picture? Why, Nell, I'll have you

both here to luncheon some day—just you two—and you can inspect her for yourself."

"What a general!"

"She's a dear. I put my arms about her neck and kissed her so recklessly that her glasses dropped, and she patted me breathlessly on the back of my head and said: 'There, there; calm yourself, my child; we'll critically analyze his taste.'"

"Did she forget all about it?"

"Mrs. Crest? Not she! In three days I had the photos and had lunched with Vivian—an entertaining, rather dashing sort of girl, with clever self-possession. I returned the photographs to Mrs. Crest the next day, but did not tell her I had meantime taken them to a photographer and had excellent copies made of them."

"Copies? Why, Nell, did you care that much?"

"Why shouldn't I have constantly before me samples of his taste?"

"I never knew you were jealous before. Did your new attachment do anything else to displease you?"

"Yes, he did. The next week he dropped in one evening after dinner while I was playing Chopin for Cousin Parthenia. 'Don't stop,' he urged; 'I am devoted to music. And this is so delightfully homey,' he added in a significant undertone. Cousin pretended not to hear the last, and asked me to play the Nocturne in G, closing her eyes to listen. Mr. Doan, the devotee of music, positively fidgeted while I was playing, yawned twice, and looked at his watch when he forgot I could see out of the corner of my eye."

"Perhaps you were not in practise, Nell."

"Betty!"

"Pardon, my dear; proceed."

"Finally he happened to think of the Nordica concert scheduled for that evening, and suggested that we go; he evidently thought any change desirable. 'I'm sorry I haven't seats,' he said; 'but if you care to we'll try our luck at the box-office.' Cousin woke up at once, highly approving, and I assured him it would be lovely and we should enjoy

the lark; so he called a carriage and we got there shortly before the opening number."

"That was nice in him, since he knew you loved music."

"Yes, it was. Still he need not have pretended to like it so much; he overdid the matter. I found he always agreed enthusiastically with our likes and indifferences in music, without however advancing any of his own or ever being able to recall an air."

"Did you wish him to be an imitation graphophone, Nell?"

"Certainly not, but I wished to feel he was sincere. There was a long pushing line at the box-office, with a nervous little ticket-man behind the glass throwing down tickets and change every three seconds, for the orchestra within was tuning up. As cousin and I stood outside the railing I noticed the man in front of Mr. Doan lay down a twenty-dollar bill and ask for 'Three best seats.' With automatic rapidity the twenty vanished, tickets and change appeared and were seized, and the line moved up a step. Then 'Three best seats,' Mr. Doan called, putting down a folded ten-dollar bill. In a moment the ticket-seller caught it up and threw down three tickets and the change, which included some silver and two five-dollar bills."

"Why, Nell!"

"Yes; I immediately thought there would be a further delay, while he corrected the mistake; but no. Mr. Doan swept tickets and money into his left hand, and with a keen glance at the seller and the next man in line, and a tiny gloating smile that matched the gleam in his shifty eyes, he moved away."

"Did he realize the mistake?"

"I'm sure he did; for when he noticed from my expression that I had seen, he remarked with a careless laugh: 'Ticket-sellers and bank-tellers never make mistakes.' 'Will it not be a mistake for us to go in now?' I asked significantly. 'No, indeed,' was his answer. 'Come on, or we shall be late.'"

"What did you do? Make a scene?"

"No, but I felt like a fraud. Cousin

Parthenia with her lorgnette, very grand, had been standing slightly aloof while we waited, and had not perceived the incident. To restore my self-respect, I bought four tickets the next day for the matinée, which I did not use."

"So the concert did not help him with you?"

"Not with me, but only with my unobservant cousin."

"Did he realize that?"

"I think not, for he continued his attentions with a certain confidence, and presently showed every indication of being ready to declare himself at the first opportunity; you know the signs."

"Did you care for him, Nell?"

"I liked him; personally he was magnetically fascinating; but I did not wholly approve of him, was afraid I could not trust him, and decided to defer a declaration for a time."

"How, dear?"

"We were driving in the park one afternoon when the May air and sunshine, the flowers and trees and general springiness seemed to urge him on. I was rather quiet and impersonal, but he commenced to talk about woman's friendship and how much it meant to a man, saying that she never fully realized how it uplifted and encouraged him, gave him a new impulse, a new attitude toward life and work."

"That sounds well."

"Yes, I was somewhat touched; and the way in which he made his eyes look honest and tenderly confiding would have touched you, too, Betty. 'After all,' he continued, 'there is an affinity not based on years, but on recognition of tastes, don't you think so?'"

"Your answer?"

"'Yes,' I replied, 'it doesn't take long for two congenial souls to recognize each other, even though there may be no love at first sight.' And I gazed away over the tennis-courts and wondered how much farther I could let him go."

"Then he?"

"Agreed perfectly, and declared that although the woman must always be clever enough to know, the man in his

awkward fashion had to declare himself and ask for the assurance of her love. 'You know I love you,' he continued, 'with a love kept for you alone; won't you——' But he did not finish, for just then something dropped from my left hand into the dust at the side of the road, and I exclaimed, 'Oh, I've dropped it!' in distressed tones."

"How could you? What did he say?"

"He looked as if he thought I had suddenly become demented, then turning saw a card about five by eight inches in the road behind. 'What is it?' he asked, checking the horses; he had not seen me take it from the folds of my dress. 'Something I should not like to lose, and that you once prized,' I replied. 'Won't you get it for me?' 'Certainly,' he answered, mystified; and getting down he went back to where it lay white in the afternoon sunshine."

"What was it, Nell?"

"He saw only a blank card, and stooping picked it up and turned it over with casual curiosity; then, Betty, how he started! He positively jumped; the effect was electrical."

"What was it?"

"The photograph of Isabel Crane."

"How atrocious! What did he do?"

"He appeared very angry, in suppressed fashion, as he handed me the photo. 'Where did you get that?' he asked gruffly, concentrating his gaze upon the horses. 'I am making a study of affinities,' I responded. 'Would you like to have one like this?' 'No, thank you; tastes change.' And with that his lips closed like the doors of a time-locked vault, and he did not speak again until we reached Cousin Parthenia's."

"I should think he would *never* have spoken to *you* again."

"Cousin Parthenia was at the window and saw at a glance that something was wrong, since Mr. Doan escorted me to the door in absolute silence. 'Nell, what is the matter?' she asked suspiciously, when he had gone after declining my invitation to come in. 'Nothing, cousin,' I replied. 'I had a most enjoyable drive.' Rossiter did not look

as if he had enjoyed it. Did you refuse him?" she queried sharply. "Why, cousin, what a question!" I returned; 'he did not ask me.' 'Strange, strange,' the old lady murmured, still eying me with intent suspicion. "When he came this afternoon I was sure a proposal was on the program."

"Nell, you are heartless."

"No, Betty; think of the Nordica tickets. And I heard him only the day before make fun of the president of his company, when he owed his position as secretary and most of his business opportunities to that man. It seemed like treachery to jeer at his eccentricities, and to me, a stranger, who could not know his fine points. I do like to see loyalty; the man who would speak in that manner about his benefactor might get careless in his remarks concerning his wife."

"Did you see him soon after that?"

"Yes, Cousin Parthenia took a hand and we found we could not avoid each other long. At first he seemed a trifle 'gun-shy,' as Cousin Fred used to say; but when he found that the park ride seemed not only ignored but absolutely forgotten, he grew more at ease, and before long was on the former friendly footing."

"But he never tried again."

"Didn't he? You should have seen him showing symptoms of wishing to be taken off the suspension list, and finally reaching the interrogation point one evening when we were together at a little housewarming dinner the Herbert Wellesleys gave. They were old friends of his, and had invited five couples to help celebrate getting their new house out of the hands of the architects. It was a dear little house, and we were all having a good time until after dinner, when I found that Mr. Doan and I had drifted off alone into Mr. Wellesley's den which joined the living-room. It was a cozy place, with an open wood-fire that was a miniature duplicate of the one in the next room; and we enjoyed examining in an informal, desultory fashion pictures and books and furniture."

"Propitious conditions."

"Yes, and it seemed quite natural to hear him say: 'Isn't this great? I envy Bert Wellesley this den and this house; it makes a bachelor feel terribly lonely!'"

"What did you answer?"

"'It is attractive,' I replied, demurely studying an etching; and he continued: 'Doesn't a girl ever get tired of the same old social round, and of hearing so many variations of the same old story? Isn't she willing to stop when the man who cares most of all comes begging?' You should have heard his voice, Betty—low, yet intense and sincere toward me, whatever it might have been toward others. It contrasted with the talk and laughter that came through the open door, for the rest were gathered in a semicircle about the fire in the living-room."

"What did you tell him?"

"'A girl always enjoys being popular,' I responded, thrilled—for he was so handsome!—but trying to collect my wits. Then he came nearer and said: 'I want a home of my own; and, dear, I want the only one—' But the rest was left unsaid; for as he began that last I turned with downcast eyes toward a cellarette in weathered oak—one of those horrid little liquor cabinets about three feet high, with decanters and glasses inside the solid oak door, and opening it screamed at the shocking sight revealed."

"Why, Nell!"

"It was done not quite so abruptly as it sounds in telling, except the scream, for we had been moving about slowly as he talked; but my exclamation brought the others from the next room. However, when I screamed, Mr. Doan's attention seemed riveted not on me or the cellarette, but on the dainty photograph of Lily Senter standing on top of the cellarette and looking saucily up at him."

"What did he say?"

"I don't like to repeat it, Betty; I never did say such a word; but he did not say it loud. He looked at me suspiciously and almost frightened, I thought. There seemed something uncanny about the situation, for although

the picture had been there for three minutes, he had not noticed its being set in place, and I had kept him away looking at other things about the room until the proper time."

"You must have had book-agents' pockets put into your dresses. Did you two continue to stare at the picture?"

"No, for the others came streaming in, and explanations concerning the cellarette, with a certain amount of laughter, followed. Finally Mr. Doan remarked: 'Bert ought to be grateful to me. When his great-aunt was here nosing around last week, I dropped the key into my pocket and told her this was a music-rack.' 'How thoughtful!' I exclaimed. 'Why not have the picture of a lyre painted on the front?'"

"Dreadful!"

"The others laughed, but he looked furious, and I knew I should have no more near-proposals that evening. I could not help it, Betty. I had heard him shortly before talking about some persons and saying mean little things that were not true, which he said either knowing they weren't true or not caring if he did misrepresent. I think a man with a disregard of the truth, a careless vicious talker, will not do."

"Perhaps he thought them true."

"I don't believe it; and even if he did, he had no right to say such things as facts unless he knew. I want a man to be a man, and that's not manly."

"Did he understand?"

"I think he suspected; it was some little time before he cared to try again."

"I'm surprised that there was an again."

"Is that a reflection on me, my dear?"

"Only indirectly; it is on your treatment of him, giving him a shade of the past whenever he was about to propose; it was ghastly."

"I really liked him very much; he was attractive, but never quite trustworthy. Just as I began to wonder whether after all those former indications were vital, and whether with high ideals about him he would not be quite

unobjectionable, I heard of his operations with the Feather Gold Mining Stock. He got a large block of it for his influence in organizing the company and placing some stock among his acquaintances; then when he knew the stock was not worth anything and probably never would be, he sold out his interest at twenty per cent. of its par value and cleared ten thousand dollars. What do you think of that?"

"Somebody must have wished to buy it."

"The idea! If they had known the state of affairs they would not have touched it; and if Mr. Doan had had any faith in it, he would not have sold every share he had."

"Dear me, how you must have investigated him!"

"Yes, he caused me considerable trouble, for I really liked him, you know. But the knowledge of that mining deal and his changing his vote in the Commercial Club race, promising one man and voting for another, emphasized my former opinion that he could not be trusted. No, Betty, if other men cannot depend upon a man, a girl had better not."

"How did he happen to try again?"

"I could not be rude to him, and cousin was his ally. I have an idea that she secretly encouraged him, talked the matter over, told him I liked him, and countenanced his further attentions. I know they had conferences, and that he appeared more hopeful after each. But matters could not go on that way indefinitely; it was almost time for me to come home, and I could see him gathering himself together for one more effort."

"Then you prepared to accept him?"

"I prepared for the expected declaration. He called one evening shortly before I was to leave. We both knew it would be our last evening at cousin's, and when he made the engagement to call he said: 'I hope you will see no one else that evening, will save that for me.' But I only smiled in reply. When he came he appeared so radiantly happy, so secure at finding no one else there, that I was on the defensive im-

mediately. He was in fine condition, and talked gaily and well for some time, was appreciative of trifling remarks, and showed admiration in his look; you know the indications."

"Ah, yes; proceed, my dear."

"Finally he said: 'Have you a photograph concealed about you anywhere?' 'Why, no,' I answered with surprised innocence. 'What do you mean?' I examined the room carefully for photographs before you came down; are there any hidden here?' 'No, indeed,' I responded. 'Explain yourself, Mr. Doan.' 'I merely wished to be sure it was safe to make a few remarks. I have something I want to say to you, but I do not wish any surprises sprung until I get through. I have tried to say this before, but certain combinations of circumstances have seemed to make it advisable to defer speaking until this time. Now, my dear,' and he appeared handsomer than ever and looked so adoringly at me that I almost forgot my decision, 'my dear, you must know what I wish to say. I may have once or twice fancied an attractive girl, but I have never found but one to really love; I can never, never love any one but—' 'Vivian Johnston,' I supplied, rising with a smile as she entered the drawing-room where we were—a charming, self-possessed beauty, becomingly gowned, and with an amused but not unkindly smile upon her face. I had had her to dine alone with cousin and me that evening, though cousin did not know why, and she had been waiting in the adjoining room for her cue. She came in perfectly."

"How did Mr. Doan refrain from murdering you?"

"He was too dazed to act; I never saw such a surprised man, and I learned the shortest possible time it takes for a man to turn absolutely crimson. She was only a moment in coming forward, and after the infinitesimal pause following my announcing her I continued: 'Tell her all about it. You will both excuse me, won't you? I will go up and keep Cousin Parthenia from getting lonely.' Then I left them."

"That was positive effrontery!"

"Don't tell me that, Betty; you haven't seen how charming Vivian can be. When I entered the library cousin looked up smilingly expectant. 'Coming for my congratulations so soon, my dear?' 'Yes'm,' I answered meekly. 'Well, child, where is Rossiter?' 'Down-stairs talking to Vivian.' 'What?' cousin exclaimed, actually rising from her chair. 'Sit down, Cousin Parthenia, be calm; I will tell you all.' And I did."

"How did she take it, Nell?"

"She was incensed and disappointed at first; but the dear old soul is something of a philosopher, and has a saving sense of humor. When she laughed, I knew I was forgiven. 'You did not refuse him?' 'No, he did not propose; in fact, we may consider that the proposal has been indefinitely postponed.' 'Doubtless you are right, my dear,' she conceded; 'you should not marry a man you cannot trust; but I am so disappointed, and I know you must be, too.' 'He is delightful in many ways, and I wish I could have accepted him,' I confessed. 'Yes, poor child; your methods may have been a trifle severe, but they were not commonplace at any rate, and I don't think his heart has been injured. You shall have the necklace, though it seems a pity that it does not go as a wedding-present,' she ended, with a sigh."

"Nell, did you think him worse than other men?"

"Perhaps not, than some; but I wish to at least *think* my husband better than other men. How could love last without respect? I knew I was right, and I should have been glad; but, oh, Betty, he was so handsome!"

"Will he never come again?"

"Never; and it would make no difference if he did."

"So now you're—"

"Broken-hearted!"

"While he—"

"Is going to see Vivian again."

"Will you *never* marry, dear?"

"Hush, Betty; my heart's not out of mourning yet; you know state mourning lasts for thirty days."

THE INCONSTANCY OF INCHUNG



*By
Quentin
M.
Drake*

MY long experience has taught me that an officer of the Quartermaster's Department, U. S. Army, must be either a philosopher or a person of soured disposition, rendering others unhappy and himself made unhappy by others; notably the women of his post. The Subsistence Department, I am aware, offers many opportunities both for unhappiness and philosophy, but the Q. M. D., with its infinite number of infinitesimal responsibilities—missing stove-legs or door-knobs, broken windows or lamp-chimneys, and the like—far excels it. Many times have I served as acting commissary officer; I have been in the Q. M. D. long enough to have reached the rank of lieutenant-colonel. So I know.

My first month or two at Tarlaginan were enough to try even my philosophy, upon which I rather pride myself. Everything had been in a chaotic state. Many of the government stores for which I was responsible, nearly all both valuable and easily spoiled, I had been forced, for want of a roof to shelter them, to leave lying in the open, with the rains likely to come squashing down on us at any moment.

By means of desperately hard work this, as well as many other things, had been remedied. We reroofed the vast old convent, in itself a village of considerable size, and into some of its rooms my quarters and stores had been removed. More hard work, through many sweltering days, had seen these

stores properly checked and arranged. Then, instead of ending, as they naturally should have done, my troubles seemed to commence afresh, and with renewed energy.

I was not the only one, however, to whom troubles came at this time. Brigadier-General Redfield, commanding the post, had his as well, and as usual when his troubles were non-military in their character, he brought them to discuss with me. I welcomed this. Not only was Redfield an old and dear friend, but I have often noticed that trying to help another fellow find a solution for the problems that bother him will nearly always drive one's own out of mind, for the time, at least.

Redfield had come to my particular corner of the great veranda and, seating himself, smoked for some time in silence.

"Hang it, Drake, it's preposterous!" he exclaimed at last, irritably flipping away his half-smoked cigar. "Why, Philly's nothing but a child."

"She's nearly eighteen," I reminded him.

"Well—what of that?" he demanded. "Eighteen! How on earth can a girl of eighteen be supposed to know her own mind well enough to choose in a matter such as this?"

"How old was your wife, Jack's mother, when you married her?" I asked in return. "How old was Jack's wife, Philly's mother? It seems to me that she has some precedent to guide her."

"That has nothing to do with it," rejoined Philly's grandfather promptly

and crossly. "Absolutely nothing. Both the marriages you mention were happy—very happy—it's true, but it only happened so. All the parties concerned took long chances, and happened to win out. I don't want Philly to take any such chances, and I won't have it. And then, though I really don't think I'm mercenary, I don't want Philly to marry on a lieutenant's pay, as my wife did, and Jack's, too. It's more of a struggle now than it was then. And Pendale has nothing else, except some prospects from an old aunt, who'll probably live to be a hundred."

"Probably she will. I've noticed that they generally do when their money is needed to give young people a comfortable start in life."

I spoke rather absently, I fancy. I wanted to collect my thoughts, for I realized that the time had come when it behooved me to tell my friend certain things for his soul's good.

"Look here, Redfield, and shut up until I've done talking," I went on after a little. "You're a brigadier-general, and are good enough to win another star before they condemn you and sell you out of the service. You command this post of Tarlaginan and do it almost, though not quite as well, as I myself could. But so far as Philly is concerned—now, stop and look at it honestly. How many times have you denied her anything that she really has set her heart upon? Probably she thinks, with every show of reason, that you exist solely in order to be loved by her and to grant her all the unreasonable things she may happen to fancy. She knows you won't deny her this, and so do I—and so do you, in the back of your head. Why, man, you brought her here to this post when you knew, as every one else knew, that the place at that time was swarming with armed and disaffected natives, and that you ought to have put her in school somewhere. And what is the consequence? She's had the time of her life, it's true, but she's been in action twice, and though she enjoyed it, it's not a place for a young girl to be. She found young Pendale here, and seeing, I sup-

pose, what a fine boy he really is, she proceeded to fall in love with him as promptly, almost, as he did with her. And she's done well for herself and him both. As for the money, I don't think that need matter much. They'll have enough to keep the instalment-man from the door; I'll see to that."

"How?" grunted Redfield scornfully. "Poison the aunt?"

"Not yet. There's no occasion. Philly's my goddaughter. I haven't a soul in the world that's kin to me, and no expensive tastes. Therefore, as I didn't in the least need it, I've twice inherited money, have saved a good bit besides, and have been fortunate in my investments. Philly'll get every penny when I die, and I can't see any reason why she shouldn't have some benefit from it while I live. And if young Pendale is as good a sort as I think him, he and she shall have an income sufficient to keep them modestly—and you'll consent, as I said before."

Redfield blew his nose sonorously, and paced the veranda several times. When at last he spoke it was in a manner that told me he was deeply moved. I talked like an old ass, he said. He didn't want my damned money for Philly, and he would be eternally condemned to several kinds of perdition if he'd let me give her anything while I lived, whether I was her qualified godfather or wasn't. He used more profanity in a shorter time than I had known him to do before since an occasion when a bottle of ink, carelessly packed in his trunk, had leaked over some papers he had spent weeks in preparing. Then he suddenly stopped in his walk and stood looking down at me. He appeared to hesitate before speaking.

"There's something more, Drake," said he. "I mean those thefts of government property from your stores. Nothing but goods useful to the natives have been taken, I believe, and if I remember correctly there already have been four different occasions when goods have been missing, and you never yet have been able to form even a suspicion as to the identity of the thief."

"You remember rightly enough," I conceded. "What of it? What in blazes has the identity of a thief to do with Philly's future happiness?"

I spoke testily, for I had succeeded in getting these thefts, and the puzzle as to who the guilty party could be, out of my mind for the moment, and it was not pleasant to have the affair lugged by its ears into a conversation upon quite another sort of subject. But Redfield went inexorably on.

"It has a great deal to do with Philly's happiness, I fear," said he, sitting down again. "I don't like to say it, Drake—I don't like even to think of it, but I wonder if you've noticed one thing; that the guard-room is next one side of the storeroom from which these goods have been taken, and that there never have been any goods taken except when Pendale was on guard."

Then it became my turn to give a neat imitation of an elderly gentleman who has lost his temper. I liked that Pendale boy, and didn't intend having him traduced by any one if I could help it.

"Pendale was on guard each time these goods were taken, eh? I dare say. I didn't notice. You were in command of the post each time, for that matter, Redfield, but it never occurred to me that it might be necessary for me to suspect that you were the thief. And if you care to know what I think, it's this; that you might well be in a better business than starting even the ghost of a rumor, on such evidence, which may grow, and cloud the reputation of a thoroughly capable and honorable officer."

And I fear I snorted, to underline my little speech, as it were. But Redfield didn't take it in the way I thought he would.

"I've started no rumors, and I don't believe any more than you do that Pendale had any hand in this thing. But if you haven't noticed that Pendale was on guard those days, others have. You know how charitable people are. I don't think it ever has occurred as yet to Pendale himself, and I hope it never will. But it is a cloud, Drake, look at

it as one will, and no name with a cloud hanging over it, no matter how slight or how ill-deserved that cloud may be, will ever, if I can help it, be mentioned in connection with Philly's."

I might have pointed out that he couldn't help Pendale's name and Philly's being coupled; that he was the only soul in the post who hadn't long since seen how things were between those two. But I thought best not to.

"It's up to us to discover that thief at once, then," said I, and to this he heartily assented.

"I've been thinking about that a good deal of late," he remarked, rubbing the back of his head with his hand, as he always did when puzzled. "Of course it's sure, I suppose, that whoever the thief was, he couldn't have got in and out of the door in the ordinary way."

"Not unless every enlisted man in the post was in a conspiracy to rob the government, and hardly then," said I. "The thefts always have occurred at night and have been discovered in the morning. Each time all the doors were found properly locked, and each time the sentries were not only different men, but from different troops or companies. We couldn't put a man to sleep inside the room; it was too full of stuff, but every other watch that could be has been kept. And nothing made any difference. You know all that; we've been over it often enough before now."

"I know," said he, nodding. "But I was going over it again in my mind. I was trying to deduce a theory."

"So have I been trying—for days," I rejoined, rather impatiently. "What theory have you evolved?"

"No theory. Nothing very much, except a certain amount of elimination," he replied. "Every side of that storeroom but one has been accounted for, I think, and we are agreed that the thefts could have occurred on none of these sides. What is on the other side of the remaining wall?"

"The Hanfords' quarters," said I. "Their spare room, where Fanny Phelps sleeps."

"Exactly. Then, as all the other sides of the storeroom are out of the

question, it obviously is on that side we must look for our solution. You mustn't misunderstand me, of course. Mrs. Phelps, as you know, is a woman for whom I have a great regard, and the highest possible opinion."

"Oh, yes; I know that well enough," grunted I. "I don't happen to recall a woman of whom you haven't the highest opinion. There may be some, but I can't call them to mind just now."

In an instant Redfield's unreasoning chivalry was aroused, and he was off. "And what then?" he demanded. "Your attitude, Drake, toward women in general, and Mrs. Phelps in particular, I cannot comprehend. Just look at what she's done—made a companion of Philly when there was no other of her own sex here with whom the child could associate. Mrs. Phelps is considerably the older of the two—"

"Ten years and then some," I interpolated.

"Well—be it so, though I think it's most indequate of you to mention it. If she is in truth that much older, all the more, then, must she have sacrificed herself in allowing Philly to be with her all the time. Nothing but pure regard for the child explains it. There is little pleasure for a mature woman in the constant company of an inexperienced girl. Yet, for some reason, or without reason, you seem to have taken a dislike to her. It's unworthy of you, Drake."

I looked at my old friend to see if by any possibility there could be a joke concealed in his words, but he was quite serious. I marveled, for I would not have thought that even his mental attitude, which was apt to make him assume that all women are much as the angels are said to be, could render him so blind where a person of Fanny Phelps' sort was concerned.

I had known her from girlhood, and it is true that I did not like her. Not that I knew anything really against her. Simply because she was a youngish widow, filled with evident anxiety once more to become a wife; a rather loud, rather blowsy type of the less desirable army woman; as, indeed, her mother

before her had been. To me there was no mystery in her reason for being so much with Philly. With all her might Fanny was hanging on to her rather highly colored charms, which, with her youth, were fast slipping away. She had been taken with Pendale. I think she really cared for him as much as she could care for any one other than Fanny. She could not admit to herself that, given a fair chance at him, she might fail to bring him to heel; her vanity would not permit that. But even her vanity could not blind her to the fact that it was safer not to leave him alone with Philly more than she could help. And the only way she could help was to be with them both. But all this was also information of a kind that it was as well not to impart to Redfield.

"Anyhow, whatever I may think of the woman, it didn't occur to me that she might be the thief," said I.

Redfield almost jumped from his chair.

"Are you insane?" he cried. "What on earth could have made you think —" Something in my face made him stop, and with his singularly sweet smile, he went on: "I didn't see at first that you were joking," he said. "But listen, Drake. It may be far-fetched, but a theory to fit the facts must be far-fetched. I don't want to rouse suspicion against any innocent person, but do you remember that native maid that Mrs. Phelps had? I can't recall her name as it was pronounced. Constance is what they said it meant in English."

"Inchung? Of course I remember her, confound her; she's caused me trouble enough."

"She has? I didn't know. But you remember Banalang, and how he escaped, don't you?"

Banalang was a chief of the insurrectos who, a short time before, had made our post so exhilarating a place of residence. I had been present at his capture, and would have been pleased to attend his execution, which would have taken place a week later, had he stayed to grace that function with his presence. But he did not stay.

"Remember Banalang's escape!" I exclaimed. "I should rather say I did."

"Just so. Then you will remember that he was confined in the very room from which these goods have been stolen, that he escaped through a secret door which led out of this room, and that this door presumably was opened for him by his wife, who had learned the secret from a relative, one of the priests who contrived it. Also, that this door was in the wall between the room in which he was confined and what is now Mrs. Phelps' bedroom."

"Of course I recollect. But what in blazes has all this to do with the thefts?" I cried.

"I don't know. But these facts, taken in conjunction that the maid who was formerly in the employ of Mrs. Phelps—I can't remember her name, but—"

"Inchung, you mean. Go on," said I impatiently.

"Taken in conjunction with the further fact that this Inchung is the sister of Banalang's wife—"

"Are you sure?" I shouted, getting on my feet. "How on earth did you find that out?"

"Yes, I'm sure," he replied simply. "Philly told me. As I said, these facts may be worth considering. At all events," he concluded, "they're about all we have to consider."

That was true; and I did consider them—considered them very hard indeed for the next few minutes. But the more I did so, the less satisfied I became.

"I fear it won't do, Redfield," I said at last. "I saw myself to having that secret door fastened up. It's out of business now, all right enough. It's fairly covered with hardwood battens on both sides, and made secure with long screws besides. More than that, the spring that opened the door was on the storeroom side, and even that I had ripped out."

I sighed disappointedly, and so did he.

"I suppose that's true," said he. "I was hoping against hope that we might have struck an idea that would work

out. It's an awful thing for a young fellow like Pendale to have any imputation of this sort on his honor, and the fact that it can't be either proved or disproved makes it all the worse. And I feel it more keenly still on Philly's account, I think. If she knew that a suspicion rested on him, it would—but here they come—look at 'em."

I looked and did see, and for the thousandth time contrasted Philly's delicate beauty with Fanny's wan but still exuberant charms, and for the thousandth time considered how blood will tell in human beings as it does in any other animal. This theory is, I know, often disputed, but it is a favorite one of mine, and to me it seems self-evident. The fatuous, more or less sheepish felicity so often seen on the countenances of youthful lovers was noticeably absent in Pendale, but an infinite joy and pride in the woman he had won shone in his strong, grave face, and when he looked at or spoke to her there came an expression of tenderness there that fairly illuminated it, and was there for all men to see.

It was there for at least one woman to see, also. Fanny was off her guard when my glance happened to rest upon her. She was a little behind the other two. Her face expressed only a sort of weary misery, the misery of one who has tried and failed, until her eyes rested on Philly. Then it took on a look of vindictive hatred that startled me, and registered itself upon my memory as a warning.

But Philly, full of eagerness, saw nothing of this. As soon as she reached the veranda she ran up to her grandfather, scuttling in advance of the others like a fox-terrier.

"Oh, Dad's Dad!" she called, as soon as she was close enough. "We've been talking it over all the afternoon, and we have it all beautifully arranged. You'll help us, won't you? Do promise!"

"Why, very well, my dear. I suppose it's all right," said he, reaching out and drawing her to him. "But what is it you want?" he asked, as an afterthought.

So accustomed was he to granting as a matter of course anything that Philly might happen to wish, that the nature of the request had become rather a secondary matter. Still, he was mildly curious. But Philly invariably was so full of her plan, whatever it might happen to be, that she thought that every one ought to know all about it as well as she did.

"Why, don't you *know*, Dad's Dad?" she cried reproachfully. "It's a ball—the ball we want to give. I haven't been at a dance for ages—not since I was sixteen. We haven't been stationed anywhere long enough, where it was civilized enough. But now—"

"A ball, my dear," remonstrated her grandfather mildly. "How on earth can we give a ball in this place?"

"Why, that big room here in the convent is just made for it, floor and all," she answered. "It couldn't be better. Can't you see, Dad's Dad?"

"Why, yes, my dear; the room would do well enough, I should think," he responded slowly. "The men, too, we might manage at a pinch. But as for the women—the dancing ones—it really seems to me as though we were—well, rather limited, Philly."

Philly screamed with laughter, and we all smiled. The post of Tarlaginan, until very lately, had not been one to which officers ordinarily cared to bring their families, for the hills that surrounded it had swarmed with armed and hostile natives. Therefore, beside Philly and Fanny, there were exactly three women in residence there; all of them elderly and two of them fat. The notion of Mesdames Clough, Hanford, and Anderson tripping the light fantastic was enough to amuse anybody.

Philly finished her laugh, kissed her grandfather, and condescended to explain. Soon, as every one knew, the strength of our garrison again was to be largely increased. Philly's idea was to send the invitations as soon as might be to the officers who were under orders to come, and in this way make them aware that Tarlaginan no longer deserved its evil reputation, and in this way induce them to bring their women-

kind with them. And then, the bait of a ball might well induce some of the said womenkind to throw their influence into the scale.

The scheme was good. More than once Redfield and I had discussed possible ways of overcoming the effect of Tarlaginan's bad name, but this plan of Philly's was far better than anything we had been able to evolve. Redfield thoroughly approved of it, and in an instant was discussing details with the three young people, and as enthusiastic as they. A minute or two later, they went away to inspect the future ballroom, and left me to myself.

Interested as I always was in anything that Philly had undertaken, I was not sorry to be alone just then. That notion of Redfield's about the door and the possibility of the woman Inchung having had knowledge of the thefts, stuck to me in spite of the apparent proof to the contrary. Once more I went and looked at the secret door through which Banalang had escaped.

It was as I left it. The battens which nearly covered it were still screwed most firmly into place. Another door, not secret, that led through the same wall, also was securely screwed shut. On a scroll that wandered over the heavy mahogany frame of this door, across the lintel and down both sides, a motto was carved in high relief: *"Ave Maria Purissima, Sin Pecado Concebida."* The final "O" in the penultimate word and the period were missing now. It was by twisting and pressing them that the spring that opened the secret door had been worked, and I had therefore torn them away to make assurance doubly sure. As for the door which the scroll surrounded, I tested it again, but found what I knew already; that only if its frame, fixed to the massive timber walls, should be forced bodily away, could it be opened.

Still I was not satisfied. I renewed a resolve I had privately made before; to watch myself, and not to relinquish that watch, hopeless as it might seem, until some definite results were forthcoming. In the weeks that followed I

was left more than usually to myself; every one else was busy with the preparations for the coming ball.

But I excused myself from this work. I had become rather morbid about that suspicion of mine, I fancy. At least, Redfield, the only one to whom I confided it, said so, and I am inclined to think he was right. Perhaps my dislike for the woman had something to do with it. I had reason for this dislike, and the reason was not, as Redfield was unkind enough to insinuate, simply because she had been Fanny's maid.

Inchung was a little, rather good-looking Filipina, with beady eyes and a catty face. She was a favorite of Fanny's, and this itself was remarkable, for Fanny was not apt to have favorites among her servants, whom she generally disliked and at times mistreated with perfect impartiality. But Inchung was no ordinary servant. She had, to a degree greater than I ever before had seen, the art of charming a certain sort of man, and she exercised it upon all who came near her.

I made no attempt, as I believe the three elderly ladies did, to follow Inchung's various emotional affairs. Certainly they seemed to belie her name—Constance. Two of them, which concerned me more or less directly, were all I had time for. The first one was with the native steward of the officers' mess, Manuel. For a time they had been affianced, and Manuel was idiotically happy. Then one of my sergeants, who had served his time, was discharged. Then a change came, and Manuel, at once, from a good servant became a sullen brute with lowered eyes and hangdog mien, who made us all uncomfortable as such a servant can in the Philippines when he neglects his work. And for this Inchung was responsible.

I don't think she really cared a *sacavale* for Sergeant Feeney, but he did for her, worse luck! Still, the temptation of having a real white man for a husband, and one at that with worldly possessions in the shape of savings, was too much for her, and Manuel had

to go to the wall. Try as I would, I could not keep Feeney from making an ass of himself. He married—really married—her. He took his discharge, and buying mules and a wagon at an I. C. sale, went to live in a qualified native shack, supporting her and himself by freighting.

All this gave me nothing, so far as concerned my theory that Inchung was connected with these robberies.

Try as I would, I could get no nearer to the culprit. But still I kept on trying. When Pendale's tour of guard-duty came around again I managed to smuggle a camp-cot into the storeroom, and went there myself, after all was quiet, to sleep, entering by the door that communicated with my office, which I locked behind me.

My rest was much broken—I hate having my rest broken—and I gained nothing but a bad headache. Once, soon after midnight, when I had fallen into a troubled sleep, I thought I saw the door—not the secret door, but the other, which led through the wall of Fanny's room, swing slowly open, letting in a glow of candle-light. So distinctly did I see it that I sat up in bed, when the door swung to again, as though whoever had opened it was alarmed by my movement, and I heard the click of a concealed catch. It made such an impression upon me that I got up, and lighting a candle, examined the door once more. I found it as I expected to find it, and as I always had found it before; every screw in place and holding hard.

It was long before I went to sleep again, and when at last I did, the dream was repeated, though with less distinctness, and the impression it made was strong in the morning. I must admit that a feeling of discouragement obtruded itself upon me. No other of Pendale's tours had been allowed to pass without a visit from the thief. How could the thief have found out about my presence in the storeroom? I had been absolutely secret—had confided my intentions to no one. I was puzzled as never in my life had I been before, and was very miserable besides.

Redfield was having troubles of his own just then. Two transports had arrived, bringing the additional troops that were expected, but to the casual eye loaded down with women and children. Doubtless the ball invitations would have done much to compass this, but a far more effective agent had been at work. Cholera had appeared in Manila, and was rapidly spreading. Even had the insurrectos still covered the surrounding hills, the officers would have welcomed our uncontaminated isolation. But Redfield lived in hourly fear that the isolation might not prove effective. This fear was on Philly's account, of course. He would far have preferred, I know, to see her in action again than exposed to this scourge of the East. He knew well the dangers of the former; the other for him had all the terrors of the unknown.

It was not until the night before the ball that Pendale was on guard again. I made up my mind to pursue a different line of conduct this time. Every safeguard, every trap that my spurred brain could suggest surrounded that room. Its door was left wide open and two sentries posted there, but no one slept in the room itself. I wished to prove without a doubt that my presence on the previous occasion must have been known. It would be a short step, it is true, but one in the right direction.

That night I slept rather less, if anything, than I had done on the occasion of Pendale's previous tour. I heard each step of the sentries, it appeared to me, but no other sounds, though I listened until I expected to sprain an ear. In the morning more goods were gone than had been taken on any previous occasion.

The sentries, dismayed at what had happened, were questioned closely, but they told nothing new. It had been no fault of theirs. They had heard no strange noises, and by the very nature of things they could have seen nothing.

There was no use in trying to conceal this theft. Such concealment would have served no good purpose even had it been possible, which it was

not. Too many of the enlisted men knew of it, and in an incredibly short time it was all over the post. Now people began to look distinctly askance at Pendale, but neither he nor Philly noticed it. They were too much taken up with the coming ball, and more still, with each other. It was not until the early evening of the ball itself that the final bolt fell.

I was sitting as usual on my veranda, employing the quiet in thinking, for there was a hush over the post. People were getting their dinners early, in order that they might have time properly to array their persons for the coming festivity. I wanted no dinner; for some reason or other my appetite seemed to have deserted me, and I was dreading having to go to the ball, when Redfield suddenly stood before me. He had approached without my hearing him, and I noticed that his khaki suit was unbuttoned and awry, and that he was in his stocking feet. His face, ghostly, in contrast to its normal healthy ruddiness, frightened me.

"Good Heavens, Redfield, what's the matter?" I asked, starting to my feet. "Are you ill? Has the cholera come?"

He shook his head and sat down heavily in the nearest chair. "No, not that last, thank God!" he said. "Nevertheless, Drake, it's terrible—terrible! It's young Pendale. Things—the things, some of them, that were taken the other night, were found in his quarters. Of course I don't believe he took them, but I had no choice. I had to put him in arrest. I—"

"Who found the things in Pendale's quarters?" I snapped.

"His own striker. His native *muchacho*, that is," replied Redfield, with something like a groan. "The man saw the end of a bundle of axes sticking out from some place or other where they had been too hastily concealed. This Inchung woman has been flirting with him, after her usual manner, I'm told, and she happened by at that time; he told her, and she went with the tale at once to Mrs. Phelps, who came to me with the woman just as I was begin-

ning to dress for the evening. It was her duty to do this, of course. She did it most reluctantly, as you may imagine."

"Reluctantly? Rot!" said I.

"Don't let us go into that discussion now, Drake," said he. "I'm not up to it. I had to tell Philly——"

He broke off, turned his head away and drew a handkerchief from his sleeve, ostensibly to blow his nose. I turned away, too, and swore.

"Do you suppose that any one will believe for a minute that Pendale took these things and then was ass enough to hide them in his own quarters so that they could be found?" I stormed. "Besides, how could he get them?"

"The things were taken. How could any one get them?" asked Redfield mournfully, by way of reply. "There'll have to be an investigation, of course, and at best it'll be a blot on the boy's record, unless the real thief is discovered. And he's a good boy, Drake—a good boy. He reminds me of what my Jack was at his age. He was in love with Philly's mother, then, and I noticed the resemblance the other day when I saw the lad look at Philly. It'll break her heart, I fear. She frightens me, the way she took the news."

Here Redfield blew his nose again, and rising, hurried away. Some time since I had remarked a certain resemblance between Pendale and Philly's father, massacred by Indians about the time of his little daughter's birth, but I did not know that he had seen it, too.

Never had my heart been heavier than when I inserted my portly form into a white uniform that evening. After all poor little Philly's eager anticipation and willing work, to have her pet ball turn out as this one was doing seemed no less than tragic. Nor was it less so when I got there. The room was beautiful with its bunting, palms, and flowers, yet it seemed like a cruel mockery when I saw the white-faced, pathetic little figure, standing alone to receive the few guests who still were dribbling in. I gave a sympathetic squeeze to the cold, limp hand she extended, and the big eyes filled, but she

turned away bravely, nevertheless, to greet another latecomer, and I left her.

Redfield was nowhere to be seen, and at this I wondered; he usually was so punctilious in such matters. Then it was that I found time to notice that though the music was playing, no one was paying much attention to it. The people gathered mostly in little low-talking groups. Something was disturbing them. I saw Brinsley, one of the cavalry majors, walk through the room with exaggerated carelessness until he came to a doctor, to whom he spoke a few words, whereupon the medical man sidled toward the door. Brinsley came on to where I was standing.

"It's here, Drake, I fear," said he gravely. "The cholera's hit us at last by the looks of things. We don't want it known through the rooms here, of course, though it's evident enough that every one surmises that something is up. I wonder how these rumors manage to spread as they do. As soon as you can get away without being noticed, the general wants you in his office. Hurry as much as you can."

He strolled away again in the direction he had named, and in a moment I followed him. Redfield was seated at his desk, and all the doctors in the post were grouped around him.

"Of course you know what has happened, Drake," said he, as I came in. "It's that ex-sergeant of yours. He wants to see you. And besides, there may be something in your line to be done. There's enough transportation ready, I think, to take you all."

There was. Every ambulance and Dougherty wagon in the post had been required to get the women to the dance and many of them still were before the door. Soon we were rolling away, a dismal procession, through the dark to the outlying house of bamboo where Feeney had made his home.

Though taken but an hour before, he was far beyond speech when we reached him. The doctors could do nothing save cluster around his bed and shake their heads as he lay there, his strong, Irish face sunken and gray, gasping out the

last of his life. It did not take him long. Through it all, Inchung, his wife, squatted on her heels in a corner, as motionless and impassive as a carved idol, the glitter of her beady eyes alone showing that she was alive. Only once did anything like a change of expression come over her face, and then it was too fleeting for me to tell what it signified, but it certainly did not strike me as one of grief. That was when one of the older doctors stepped forward and pulled the sheet over Feeney's face. Having done this, he turned to a man who had come into the room.

"You'll have to get another detail at once and put a guard around this house, for it will have to be quarantined," said he.

"It's cholera, then?" I asked.

"Probably. A thousand to one it is, but we can't tell yet. We'll have to make a microscopical examination, which will be done at once. Until then we'll take no chances, of course. Will you go back and tell Redfield to have 'Home, Sweet Home,' played at once, Drake? We can't have any unnecessary gatherings of people until this thing is decided."

Gladly I did as he asked, and the guests went silently away, leaving to Philly the luxury of being alone with her grief. Game to the last, she took leave of each one. But she shuddered instinctively as Fanny effusively kissed her. With all my heart, as I noted the look of gloating triumph that accompanied that Judas kiss, I wished the Widow Phelps in poor, foolish Feeney's place.

There was little time, however, to think about that sort of thing. All night long, and far into the next morning, Redfield and his officers worked, sustained by the kickshaws and sweet punch that was to have made the ball supper. I never have liked that sort of stuff since. The post resounded to bugle-calls and the tramp of armed men; a cordon was drawn around it as quarantine doctors came and went, and one report followed another. It was nearly noon when one of the younger

surgeons came in, and I saw from his face that he had something of importance to tell before he had spoken a word.

"It's not cholera, sir," said he. "The examinations have proved that beyond a doubt."

"What in God's name is it, then?" asked Redfield, amid a breathless hush.

"A corrosive poison of some sort, sir. Just what we can't be quite sure, yet. We think it's a trituration the natives make of a plant they call arrowhead. When used it approximates the symptoms of malignant cholera so closely that it's impossible to tell them apart. It's used largely by women who are jealous of their lovers or have no further use for their husbands. And I'm told, sir," he ended significantly, "that Feeney's wife has been sighing again for Manuel lately."

"Has she been arrested?" I asked.

"Not yet, sir. She vanished when the guard on her house was relieved, before we realized how the suspicion pointed to her. But she can't get away. We've set a watch on Manuel's quarters, and, anyhow, the cordon would stop her if she tried to get through."

As he finished, there went up a chorus sigh of relief that all but started the roof. For my part, I went at once to my quarters, threw myself, all dressed as I was, on my bed, and in an instant was making up a large quantity of the sleep I had lost.

I must have been very hard to wake. Though I heard a shriek, it only mingled with a dream that happened to be in progress. But another shriek and another followed the first, each growing nearer than the one before it, until it seemed to be directly in my ears. As I started to my feet, I heard still another, the last fainter than those which had gone before and with a horrid sort of gurgle in it. Footsteps resounded in the echoing corridor, all of them going in the same direction. As I ran out it seemed as though every one who had been at the ball—every man, that is—was following a trail of red drops that appeared on the polished floor.

Straight into Fanny's room the trail led, and across it. The room was empty, but the great door with the motto around it stood open, swung into the room, casing and all. Then, like a flash, there came a realization of my own stupidity. The notion that the old priests might have had two secret doors, one of which could be opened from each side of the wall, never once had occurred to me.

Inside the storeroom it was dark, and the air was heavy with the sickly smell of blood. Never before, on a battlefield or elsewhere, had I known this odor so strong as it was in that confined space. Then some one brought a light, and the cause was plain.

Blood was everywhere; on the floor, the wall, and the piles of stores. There was a pool of it where lay the dead body of Inchung, and more where Manuel reclined against a barrel, a short knife in his hand and with a score of wounds in his throat. Apparently he had dealt out stabs impartially between her and himself. He raised his eyes to Redfield's face, showing white in the lamplight against the shadows behind it, and with an effort he spoke, and to the astonishment of all, in English.

"She was not fit to die, but was less fit to live, so I killed her," said he, thickly. "But I loved her, and therefore I die, too. She was false; false as hell. False to him whom she married, to me whom she loved, and them whose salt she ate. To the woman who loves the imprisoned officer, but is not beloved by him—to her alone was this woman not false. They both were bad, and could help each other. The

white woman, not being loved, wished to destroy—"

He choked and stopped. Some one handed a flask of brandy, which I hurriedly put to his lips. He took a swallow, gathered strength from it, and went on:

"The white woman wished to destroy this officer, and therefore caused the other to conceal stolen things in his house. But not all of them were there. The rest were buried beneath this convent. Buried there by night, and there they still remain. She told me."

There was a gush of blood from his mouth, his head fell backward, and all was over. For a moment we all stood silent, then Redfield made a sound that was uncommonly like a sob.

"I must go and tell Philly. She must know at once," said he, evidently thinking aloud, and rushed away.

I did not care to linger in that place. Together with Brinsley I turned away, leaving Inchung and her lover in the sanctuary she had tried and failed to win. As we passed again through Fanny's room, Brinsley stopped and looked about him. His cynical face softened as his eyes fell on the feminine knickknacks, and he sighed.

"There's a transport at the *playa* now," said he. "I suppose she'll go home in that. For Redfield won't try to do anything to her. He doesn't need to. Her punishment is for life, poor soul; her woman friends will see to that. And she was a nice girl, once," he added, with another sigh, "a very nice girl. I liked her more than a little." Then, with unnecessary noise he stamped out of the room and away toward his own quarters.



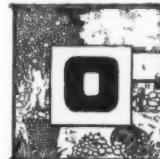
THE FLOWER OF LOVE

SWEETER than any poet's thought,
Older than any time-worn creed,
Greater than any word or deed,
The miracle that love has wrought.

BETH SLATER WHITSON.

IN MUSICLAND

By William C. Armstrong



NCE an American always an American. Outwardly, our birth-right may be successfully disguised, for we are the most adaptable of people, but our method of thought, like our action under stress, remains ineradicably American.

And so we face foreign ways and conventions with a sense of humor which, wrecking seriousness, helps us to master them with a gay stoicism that Continentals are comforted to call our "superficiality."

American singers have been given plenty of leeway to prove all these things; with their operatic experiences, Italian, German and French, we are variously acquainted, though the Paris débüt is a suave affair, generally devoid of adventure. But débûts in the French provinces, of which we hear nothing, are no such tame proceedings.

In Paris they dismiss facts with such gracious politeness. If a singer has no voice they explain that she is young and pretty; if nature and art combined still fail in these trifles they say she is nice and wears pretty clothes. For Paris, in one aspect, is particularly proper; the per cent. of its inhabitants that enjoys telling the truth because it is disagreeable is refreshingly small. In the provinces they have no such qualms.

Madame Doria, the new contralto at

the Manhattan, has probably had more complete experience in the French provinces than any other American, appearing as "guest" throughout the length and breadth of them; to-night at Rouen, two nights later at Nice, on to Dijon, and over to Lille in quick succession, arriving in time to rehearse until two in the morning, and supposed to be fresh and in good voice for that night's performance. In "Carmen" she has sung in every large provincial city, with spoken dialogue, not recitative between, and without comment as to foreign accent; although from Boston, in appearance she might well be mistaken for a Frenchwoman; long residence began, and adaptability finished the task.

The tongue she learned at the convent of St. Sacrament in Paris; there she completed her vocal training under Madame Marchesi, sang the rôle of *Brangaene*, with Dalmore as *Tristan* and Litvinne as *Isolde*, at the Monnaie in Brussels by way of débüt, and sang it afterward seventeen times in that season. All this was a mere prelude to Rouen and provincial adventures, and Rouen at that time inspired artists much as Bluebeard did Sister Anne.

The opera there is directed on a plan so patriarchal that Abraham would have rejoiced in it. The mayor and submayor, or "Adjutant of Beaux Arts," as he is called, are its head functionaries. There is a subvention of one hundred and thirty thousand francs

from the city, which has only one hundred thousand inhabitants. Each inhabitant, possessed with the idea that the amount is an individual benefaction, has individual exactions in proportion. Rouen is a hundred miles from Paris, and consequently knows everything. These are the buoyant conditions!

But let Madame Doria describe the début:

"In Rouen, if they like you they take off anything from scarf-pins to flowers and throw it on the stage. If they do not like you they blow into keys and squeaking mirlitons, or throw wooden animals, oranges, and tomatoes oftener than bouquets. They have been known even to unscrew the chair-seats and hurl them at vocal offenders. A singer may be fêted throughout a performance, and one weak note in the last act is sufficient to set the audience to shrieking. If one can sing in Rouen one is, at least, prepared to sing anywhere.

"Three trial appearances are required before any engagement is signed. At the end of the opera on the third night, the stage-manager comes out and announces: 'Mademoiselle — has effected her third performance. Will you show your decision?' Then it begins. Some applaud, others jeer; the place is in a tumult. The stage-manager, meanwhile, stands quite calmly awaiting the outcome; he can afford to, having no concern in it. When his practised eye and ear tell him which party is in the ascendant, he fetches a card of announcement on one side of which is painted 'refused,' on the other 'accepted.' If the singer is refused the curtain falls, if accepted he leads her out from the wings, where the unfortunate creature has been waiting, with a new demonstration in store for her. Admirers applaud. Opposers shout: 'Burn her!' 'Throw her into the Seine!'

"Even then, at the end of a month, if she does not please, no matter for how long her contract, she is dismissed like a servant. Can you wonder that artists want to come to New York, where they are treated like human beings, where great fortunes may await

them, and where there is prospect of new operas and new parts?

"The night I was accepted at Rouen they refused the bass and the barytone. While I was alone on the stage with the tenor things went calmly. With the advent of the bass for his big air in the second act, such an uproar began that we could not hear even the brasses in the orchestra; that it was playing at all we knew only from the waving of the conductor's baton.

"'It's not for the contralto and the tenor,' they shouted, 'but we won't have the bass and the barytone!'

"When the curtain went down their excitement went up. It became pandemonium. The police were called, lights were shut off, and the audience, rushing, pushing, clamoring, fought its way to the doors, and kept on fighting outside in the streets.

"Then I went to Paris for a week's rest.

"Now, for the last two years, they have had a new mayor, and things go easier there, for artists who could go elsewhere went, and Rouen had trouble in mustering an ensemble.

"Why did I stand it? To get experience. Of that you get all kinds there, but the best is the practise in many rôles that gives versatility. I love the theater; there is something fascinating to me even in its odors, like the race-track to horses."

There you have it! The sustaining sense of humor, the gay stoicism, the practicality, the enthusiasm, ingredients in the American composition shared pretty generally.

The title rôle of *Messaline* in De Lara's opera, a part in which Madame Calv  was heard a few times at the Metropolitan, has been Madame Doria's greatest success; in one season she sang it twenty-eight times, and in all she has made in it sixty-four appearances. Her criticism on the criticized rôle is:

"In the world and on the stage, everything depends upon who does it. Take society to-day in England, for instance, smart women use slang, bad English, and tell things frightful even to listen to, but it is, perhaps, a duchess

who does it, and she does it like a duchess. *Messaline*, no matter where, or what the conditions, to be *Messaline*, must remember that she still is an empress. In both society and on the stage, it must be the manner in which things are done that shuts out the sting of vulgarity."

This point of advice that De Lara gave her she holds as another item of her stage philosophy:

"The artist must have voice, a heart that throbs and feels, and a brain that governs it. After heart come clothes; a singer must be dressed as if millions were rolling in from all sides. If an artist has not the price of a meal, she must be dressed well."

There is no phase of youth more charming than that of the young singer just fluttering into a world that she believes lined with realized dreams and upholstered with sunshine. She has fancied gloriously what it means to be a prima donna, and, just having entered upon that estate, is still fancying gloriously how delightful it is. One would no more blot the bloom from her picture than one would scrape the painted wings of a butterfly to prove the skeleton underneath to be colorless.

The most of us have parental moments in contemplating such a subject. Even Heine, who scarcely shone as a domestic light, had one such when he wrote, "Thou art like unto a flower," and gave food for torture to all succeeding generations of composers.

A beautiful woman is like a rare song floating out through an open window, all the world has a free share of pure joy in her. And, like the song, she establishes a memory that leaves us her debtor. But a beautiful woman whose mind is merely a mirror for the reflection of her own image—and, young or less so, she is not infrequent—is no more attractive than the plain one who invests her capital in a bank paying no interest.

With this present subject, the youngest of the Manhattan's prima donnas,

no such mental trait can be connected. She it was to whom Madame Marchesi inscribed these lines, here literally translated from the French:

I love your beautiful and soft voice,
Your soul so limpid and pure;
Your song like the nightingales' of the wood,
Song sublimely winged by nature.

The young singer herself is descended from the Dukes of Appua and Kings of Sicily. When William the Conqueror sailed for England, his first cousin, of that same line, Tancredi by name, came with him, founding the family of which Sir Thomas Tancred is now the head. Reverting logically to the original when she entered upon her career, Miss Sybil Tancred took the name of Tancredi.

She was born on a great sheep-run, owned by her father, in New Zealand. Drouth swept away the best part of his possessions, and the mother, with her two daughters, returned to England. The talent of Miss Tancredi for the violin brought her the distinction of August Wilhelmj as teacher. In those childhood days he said of her: "She not only plays the tone true, but she plays flat on the top of it." Then the voice arrived; that was in Dresden. But it costs to live, even in Dresden, and birds, no matter how small, have to be fed. The last of the New Zealand property had crumbled away from their possession as if in an earthquake. The trio journeyed to Paris.

At this juncture, something so humorous that it could only happen in England promised well for the moment to the young singer's family. A certain Tancredi had died, leaving the house and income that had survived him to become a home and fund for "decayed gentlemen," a type with which Great Britain is so richly endowed.

The exaction for this beneficence was that his body be kept above ground. Many comic-opera plots have been founded on smaller possibilities of development.

The testator eventually disintegrating as completely as the fortunes of the gentlemen under his roof, in a moment

of thoughtlessness they buried him. Before the cellar floor—for it was there that they put him—had fairly hardened, the courts of chancery were aroused by their lawlessness. For a brief time it appeared that the estate and its income might revert.

But overnight, and let us hope, for entirety's sake, not too hastily, the other decayed gentlemen removed his dust to a glass case in that drawing-room which they so nearly had lost.

But youth is not greatly bothered over dust, even though it have prospective gold in it, and the little singer of an old house studied on in Paris under Madame Marchesi, whose great heart has musically mothered more than one prima donna. A long list of leading rôles she put then to her credit in "Roméo et Juliette," "Faust," "Thaïs," "Lucia," "Lakmé," "Louise," "Rigoletto," and some others.

But what touches one most is not her determination, not the illusions that she harbors so serenely, not her fresh, youthful beauty, but the simple joy she has in singing smaller rôles while waiting for bigger ones, and thus be of practical use to the two women whose lives are so wrapped up in hers.

To sing "Carmen" in Spain means to invite destruction, if your play is not Spanish in both conception and detail. Even Madame Calvé refrained from attempting it in her Madrid engagement, for, while Bizet's music is national enough in its tinge to meet favor, the French ideal of the title part is too much of a drawing-room figure to gain approbation in Spain anywhere.

De Segurola, the first Manhattan *Escamillo* this season, has done the rôle in Seville itself, at the San Fernando Theater, and in Seville *Escamillos* are still filling active engagements in life. To please them is about as fine a feat as it would be to acceptably play Mr. Roosevelt in Washington, with Mr. Roosevelt himself multiplied in the audience.

In the multitudinous presentations of "Carmen" we have often regarded *Escamillo* as the "Toreador Song" with

an encore, and a shoulder broad enough for the prima donna to lean against effectively.

In a way, Mr. De Segurola has created the part by thinking about it, other than in the routine sense, before he appeared in it. For him it remained, being both lawyer and Spaniard, to restore the bull-fighter to his rational, national place in the cast. Being, too, a close friend of Mazzantini, the foremost and most adored toreador of Spain, a man whose face and physique might stand as ideal of *Escamillo*, he had the assurance of realism when they built up the part together. A strange coach for an opera-singer, except that in Spain a great toreador is the peer of a don.

They began with the costume, which is a replica of Mazzantini's own, a foundation of red velvet, heavy with dull bullion and, gay embroidery; the hat was a present from the bull-fighter himself.

Thus far progressed in the creation, Mazzantini unburdened his mind of one point that had particularly irritated him with himself as portrayed behind the footlights; the fight between José and *Escamillo* in the third act was too fiercely in earnest, too unassured as to outcome to fit the truth. The toreador considers himself invincible. He takes up a combat with bull or man, with patronizing, light condescension. If either persists in seeking destruction it shall be meted to him with insolent, débonair fatalness.

From one situation to another they turned together, Mazzantini telling him simply how the assumed *Escamillo* should appear to be the real one, De Segurola recognizing his authority, working it out in application.

Another item must be the cavalier side of him, for your true toreador is always a cavalier in a spectacular way; it makes part of his popularity with the public. Think of the short-legged *Escamillos* whom this insight has escaped! Think of Pol Plançon, who made him a kid-gloved high priest of Isis, and good Edouard de Reszke, who played him as the kind-hearted uncle, who

would have invited the bull to visit him for at least a week.

One "cavalier" episode, not practicable at the Manhattan, must therefore be omitted by the new *Escamillo*; that is, his arrival with *Carmen* in a carriage before the bull-ring, when, assisting her to alight, he throws down his cloak for her to alight on.

To see De Segurola do this bit of pantomime is to value it, and in discussing it he will do it twice over to prove his point, for the true artist sacrifices a situation, once conceived, as regrettfully as a painter would relinquish the cherished finishing touches.

In this final act another flash of realism has been developed. The real torero is familiar with sudden death, and the proper etiquette in its presence. After *José* has stabbed *Carmen*, *Escamillo*, cavalier to the end of the story, covers her with his cloak to shield from curious eyes the woman in whose life he has played a part, and, removing his hat, stands bareheaded over her.

The tenor varies in temperament and the vagaries that go with it, but the basso leaves undisturbed a happy impression. It may be that his physical make-up, big, masculine, has chiefly to do with it, and, being so thoroughly masculine, he is as thoroughly free from complexity.

The barytone is oftener the real thinker among male singers, being a happily modified medium between the nervous excitability that goes with a high C, and the phlegmatic placidity that is not unknown to accompany a low one.

But whether the basso is deep-thinking or fails to think at all, he is more genuinely comfortable to live in the house with than any other vocalist.

Only rash ignorance would conclude, though, that the singer is alone a type of disturbing qualities, for experience is apt to prove him to be very often more amenable, and decidedly more modest of his attainments than many in other professions.

If you would seek out the irrational-

ly self-absorbed, you have only to look about you in every walk of life; they lurk in the most unsuspected of corners, where art, or even its simulation, never penetrates.

To turn to the basso is almost invariably to turn to a study in optimism; Félix Vieulle is typical of the type. The very precept that has guided his life is a proof of it; he trusts to luck. And trusting to luck in his case has meant deciding on what he wanted, and hopefully leaving circumstances, however meager the prospect, to bring it.

When he had finished a long course at the Paris Conservatoire, he signed a two years' contract for opera at Nice, and made his débüt in "Mignon." Carré, just then forming a new company to sing at the Paris Comique, heard him, and offered an engagement for the next season.

A more practical, or perhaps one should say a more material, mind would have been deterred by the fact that an engagement for the same period already existed. But Vieulle, trusting to luck, and longing for Paris, its appreciation, and, not unnaturally, its boulevards, signed with Carré.

Campo-Casso, his impresario of the moment at Nice, extracting cynical amusement from the situation, seemed to enjoy it. Unlike Vieulle, he forgot that circumstances often change themselves unaided. His bankruptcy presently may have reminded him of it.

Joyfully freed by the sudden collapse of the season, the basso, who had gone a good half-way to meet luck, received the reward of his confidence.

His Paris contract, made when only the most sanguine of hopes would allow any thought of fulfilment, brought him where his best opportunities lay, and gave him the chance of all others for his career.

The touching confessions of a great financier on how to lay the foundations of fortune on twelve cold beans a day could not allow more cheerful results than Vieulle's optimism, and, after all, why weigh too gravely the preternatural value of judgment? It is results and not plans that count. The worth of

every decision depends, not on its wisdom of conception, but on the way it turns out.

Luck played its part in Vieulle's art growth as well, for in art, surrounding conditions, impossible of evasion, either ruin an artist or make him.

Those conditions with Carré were invaluable, for, of the visual side of things, as much could be written of the Comique, as an artistic influence, as of Bayreuth.

When Carré took over the theater its scenery was a travesty; what it owned of tradition had to be revolutionized. In action on its stage, naturalism, reality, and detail presently supplanted academic automatism.

From three months to three months and a half were then, and are still, required there for the preparation of a new work. The singers are called together to hear the libretto read, and its situations and possibilities analyzed, page by page. Then come long rehearsals of the music, the cast seated with notes in front of them, following the parts of the others, and, in turn, singing their own. That much firmly accomplished, they are free to begin the development of the action that goes with the music.

To make such a school of real value, Vieulle had behind him the benefit of seven years' training at the Conservatoire. Intelligence he has, and enough of it, and a picturesque imagination, the same that helped him to accept one engagement while he still had another uncompleted.

Vieulle's photographs in those rôles in which we have not yet seen him, show in each a study of characterization outwardly so complete and typical

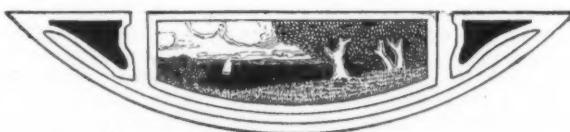
that they might be regarded as portraits from life of the authors' originals. That is one important phase of their art for which we have to thank these French singers at the Manhattan.

Very often, even at the Comique, where the most of them hail from, the period in which an opera is placed is not adhered to strictly in the costuming; the French artistic sense in design will not always allow of it. They modify, they temper the antique even, as in the presentation of Erlanger's "Aphrodite" there; but they blend things in the picture so admirably, they make the appeal to the eye so perfectly balanced, the impression left is that if rigid rule is sometimes disregarded, the original would have been improved by the same departure.

At the old Comique Vieulle's life came near to being snuffed out rather early, for he is a child of the theater. That was on the night the Comique burned, nearly twenty years ago. He was appearing with his little brother, scarcely older than he, as part of the spectacle in "Mignon."

The frenzied, struggling people, threads of flame, and smoke-clouds make part of the picture left indelibly with him. Escaping through the cellar, the boys were separated. For two hours they searched for each other, rushing from street to street in the child's unreasoning terror, their nondescript stage-clothes covering half-broken hearts.

Perhaps that escape is also ascribed by Vieulle to luck; at any rate, the outcome left him with courage to continue in a career that less optimism might have regarded as a closed incident with that evening.



LEANDER'S

By Roy



REBELLION

Norton



LT was a kettle full of sour beans, a two-pound cake of limburger cheese, and a picture of the girl who used Zozodoes chewing-gum that caused the uprising on Snodgrass Gulch, and for a time disrupted, broke, smashed, and punctured the peace of the cabin on its rugged crest. It even disjointed the friendly relations, which had existed for so many years that both had forgotten the date, between Leander Boggs, the man who owned the claim, and his force, which consisted of one Silas Jones. And it took much to do that; for Leander Boggs was a meek and lowly man, entitled by the word of the Good Book to inherit a goodly portion of the earth.

It is certain, however, that until the event of the beans, the limburger, and the Zozodoes girl, Leander had leaned upon the graces of "the force," for Silas had charms. It was Silas who did some of the work, what there was done, who did some of the cooking, what there was of it, and who, with a flow of language that was bombastic, if not enlightening, smoothed the wrinkles from Leander's troubled brow when there were any wrinkles to smooth. As Leander was wont to remark: "I don' know th' meanin' of them highfalutin words o' his'n, but it suthin' pearks me up to hear Si talk."

So, as time went on, Silas generously allowed his employer the lion's share of their toil, permitted him to cut all the wood, bring all the water, wash the

dishes, and sharpen the tools, and in return gave words of consolation and—kept most of the money. But Leander, being meek and lowly, made neither protest nor complaint. That is, he had not until the eventful day when the rebellion against conditions and all things really started—when a lack of culinary methods aroused his long-slumbering ire.

It took him some time to get aroused, and in the interim he sat on the porch of his humble abode, his lank, angular figure hunched up and his hardened fingers thoughtfully toying with a large and glistening wart on the end of his large and bony nose, an infallible sign of wretchedness.

"Somethin'," he said, addressing an inquisitive bluejay that hopped impertinently at his feet, "oughter be did. Seems like this place is goin' plumb to rack an' ruin. Now, that Si's an awful good feller but lacks—lacks judgment! Knew I could think o' that word," he added triumphantly. "Yes, sir, he lacks judgment."

He hoisted himself into his boots, turned slowly to the door, and looked pensively inside.

"There's them beans! Cooked a ket-
the full nigh onto a week ago, we've
been chewin' on 'em a week, they ain't
half gone yit, and there you air. All
right in the winter-time but ten days at
a stretch is too much for hot weather,
and that's what makes me feel bad
now. Then there's that dodgasted
pickle-kag that he always forgits to
cover, with the flies hangin' round it
as if it was their'n. Wuss'n that, Si

had to go an' dump them salmon bellies in a-top of 'em because there wa'n't no vinegar within twenty mile. So they all taste a heap wuss now. Beds ain't been made for a month when they orter be made at least onct a week, floor ain't been swept since New-year's, an' the lamp-chimbleys ain't been swiped out; but all that don't explain ter me why this place has smelled like a fertilizin' factory ever since Si made that last trip to town. Somethin's got ter be did."

He began a determined inspection, lifting the covers from cans and pots and sniffing his way like an ancient hound on the trail. At last he opened a lard-pail and staggered back.

"That's it!" he muttered triumphantly. "Si toted up two whole pounds o' limbugger, chawed a hunk off one corner an' left it sitting on the stove when he cooked breakfast. He knows I hate limbugger. It don't taste good, and it's a cinch it don't smell good, an' I ain't goin' to stand for it no more. Ef he ain't got no judgment, I'll use mine."

It was the moment of fate, for in looking around for something with which to handle the cheese his eye lighted on the merry, caressing glance of the peroxide girl who smiled at him from the heart of the Zozodoes labels above the shelf. It was like an inspiration. His fingers worked themselves thoughtfully through his scant hair and he smiled back. He wondered why he hadn't thought of that solution before.

"Ef I had you fur a wife," he said, addressing her, "we'd have fresh beans every day, you'd keep the kiver on the pickle-kag, and there wouldn't be no limbugger hangin' around the stove; but I reckon you're taken by this time, fur you've been a-hangin' up there goin' on ten year, an' besides I ain't used to talkin' to women, except Bill Rigg's wife down at the camp an' she's married a few."

"What time's it gittin' to be, Leander?"

A voice broke into his meditations, and he turned to discern Si's stumpy figure framed in the doorway.

"About two hours to quittin'-time, Si."

"Guess I won't work no more today. I ain't feelin' what you'd call booteous—kind of a disorganizin' of my diaframe."

"Mebbe it's them beans," Leander suggested, poking a tentative finger into the kettle. "Mebbe they ain't fresh."

"They're as sweet as the balm of Gil-lod," Silas asserted in self-defense.

Leander turned and fronted him.

"Si, why don't you take that infernal limbugger an'—" he began angrily, but paused as he noted the surprised and injured expression on "the force's" face. He fumbled for words. "An'an' put it off the stove when there's a fire goin'?" he concluded meekly.

"What fur?"

"Well, it ain't no roses when it gets het up."

"Toasted cheese is the finest remedy on this here earth. When th' functions of the inner man need invigeratin' all you got to do is to mastercate a hunk o' that bovine solidity an'—zip! ev'ry orgin begins to vibrate. That there cheese is a blessin' to human man, Leander Boggs, an' if you'd eat some once in a while you'd be a blamed sight more industrious, not to speak of—"

Leander threw his fists up in a despairing, repugnant gesture, and asserted his superiority, a thing which he had not had the temerity to do before in three years.

"You kin just toddle back an' work an hour more, an' I'll cook up the grub this evenin'," he said, and Silas, after a dazed look, started toward the door with the air of one who has been betrayed by his best friend. He even evidenced a thought of mollifying his employer, and turned back with a sudden assumption of something important to impart. He pulled a scrap of a newspaper from his pocket and carefully laid it on the pine table between the offending bean-kettle and the baking-powder can.

"I knocked off a leetle sooner, Leander, because I found this where them feller's that was a-huntin' left it last week, an' thought I'd bring it to you."

He passed out on the trail and Leander looked regretfully after him. He

felt that he had been unduly harsh in asking his "hired hand" to work more than four hours a day. He had a notion that he should call him back and apologize. He did, and Silas accepted the reprieve gratefully, asserting that he "didn't feel none too galvanic nohow." There was an era of good feeling, but Leander cooked the evening meal while "the force" went peacefully to sleep on the front porch. Fate was again at work, for between whiles Leander looked at the paper, painfully deciphering in the personal column the following:

Wanted—A good husband by a young and sprightly widow lady. I am clever, refined, and well educated, am of a loving, cheerful disposition, and have no incumbrance. Wish to correspond with a middle-aged man of good moral character and some means who will make me a kind and loving helpmate. No triflers need apply. Address Cynthia Blazer, Lock Box 23, Hopperville, Kansas.

He stopped work for a long, long time, and the biscuits burned in the oven. His finger hovered over the words "No incumbrance." When the smoke from the stove recalled him he said a few harsh things he had learned while driving mules, made up another batch, and still looked thoughtful.

"Never heard tell on 'em advutisin' before," he muttered. "Wants to git married, an' so do I." He put the fresh batch in the oven. "Bet she'd make some feller a slappin' good wife."

He stopped and looked thoughtfully at the Zozodoes girl and gave her a sly Lothario wink. But it was not until after the evening meal that he craftily broached the mystifying difficulty of the advertisement to his mentor.

"Si," he said awkwardly, "they's a couple o' words I see here I cain't understand. What's this?" he demanded, pointing a grimy finger at "sprightly."

"That there, um-mh!" Si paused to take several puffs at his pipe. "That there means, Dod gast this pipe—out again—wait till I light her." He arose, walked slowly to the match-box hanging on the wall, selected one with great care and lit his pipe with a contemplative expression. "That there word

means red-headed," he announced as he resumed his chair with the air of a man who has solved a problem. "One o' them blondes."

"Like that one up there?" Leander pointed at the Zozodoes girl who still smiled back.

"Sure! That's a sprightly one—meanin' red-headed—blonde. Sure!"

"And this?" Leander pointed at "No incumbrance."

Silas was quicker this time. He had an air of great learning.

"That means she's got no physical deframaties. Ain't spavined, nor nothin' like that. Got no brands or saddle galls. Got no children, or livin' husbands, or—oh, well—that's it!"

Leander evinced great joy and pronounced eagerness.

"Now, look here," he said, bringing his fist down on the table with a bang. "I want you to answer this for me. Don't go and use them highfalutin words just cause you been through college, bekase I don't allow to make her think I'm eddyicated when I ain't. Jest write her the facts an' say I'm her man."

He took time to look at Silas who had wilted down as if blighted by a frost.

"Jumpin' Jemimy!" he whispered hoarsely. "Ye ain't gittin' matrimoniously rampant, be ye, Leander? What in blazes do you want with a woman monkeyin' around here for?"

"Well," Leander answered in a conciliatory spirit, "things look purty bad around here, Si, an' I'm gittin' tired of scrubbin' an' washin' and so on. It'll be a heap easier for both of us to come in from work and find everything cleaned up an' a hot supper waitin' for us, an' you cain't tell—mebbe she'll bring lace curtains with her an' a g'raniun or two."

Silas brightened a trifle. He began to see some advantages.

"This conjugal bliss don't always make good," he said as a last warning; "but I'll write an' you copy it."

So it was that after two hours' tedious work the following literary gem was produced:

DEER MISSUS BLAZER: i red you're lone-some notis in the Butte *Intermountain* and take my pen in hand to anser i am 41 year old and have black hair and eyes before it turned gray. i have one man Silas workin for me. i am a luving and lonesome man and will make you a good husband. i like sprightly women better than black-haired ones and make a hundred and fifty dollars sum months and sum months a little more, anser at once as i am waitin for an anser. i will anser when you anser.

luve from your friend

LEANDER ZERABAIM BOGGS.
Post offis Silver Bow, montana.

It was mailed by Leander himself. He began to suspect Silas, so took no chances. And in due time Leander and Silas received, opened, and spelled out the reply:

DEAR LEANDER: I hereby grasp my pen in hand to answer your sweet and loving letter, and I can't tell you how you made me love you when you wrote those sweet and loving words. And I want to tell you I am some past twenty-five years of age and have golden hair and am a good cook and tall and stately and not afraid to work, and if you love me answer at once because I have 63 other offers since I wrote in the paper, but I love you and if you will send the money for the ticket I will come at once because I would rather marry you than some one I don't know. I send you a picture of my sister Arabella. She lives in Paradise, Arkansas. I ain't had no tintypes for a long time and my last husband used them to nail over mouse-holes in the corn-crib.

Love to my darling Leander,

CYNTHIA.

(xxxxxxxxxx)
kisses.

They decided Arabella looked like the Zozodoes girl. Indeed they passed most of the days loafing around and making comparisons in that long interim after Leander sent the money for the ticket and a liberal present of twenty-five dollars additional. And on the appointed day when she was to be met Leander drove trembly away after advising Silas to "clean up them dishes and the cabin a mite." The decrepit old pony, nearly as old as his master and as meek in spirit, seemed to meander over the road, and Leander was fearful lest he miss the train; but he got there two hours before time and eagerly watched the track for "the cyars bringin' his blusheen' intended." Silas had given him those touching lines.

When the train finally hurried in and stopped it landed a drummer, the road-master, and a woman holding a girl of perhaps twelve years of age by the hand. Leander felt a wave of disappointment surge through his breast and muttered mournfully: "Them men ain't her, an' that there woman's got a incumbrance hangin' onto her."

Slowly the platform emptied, the train went about its business, and Leander felt more sorrowful. The woman approached.

"Be you Leander Boggs?" she asked. Shades of departed viragoes! Maybe this was she. Tall and angular, hair of fiery red, eyes deep-set and piercing, long and hooked nose, and a jaw that was ominously square. The girl brazen, monkey-faced, and curious, sized him up as he, meek and lowly, thought of the Zozodoes girl and wondered whether he could escape by flight. Before he knew it he had admitted his identity and was lost.

"Why, Leander!" Cynthia shouted, with a smile so effusive that it threatened to hook the point of her nose over the edge of her chin. "Ain't you goin' to kiss your lovey?" she added coyly.

Leander gulped several times, closed his eyes, and succeeded in pecking the bridge of her nose. His only protest was a feeble: "Thought you didn't have no incumbrance, Cynth," looking the meanwhile at the girl.

"Incumbrance, lovey! Lord, she ain't no incumbrance! Lilly's just a little angel, ain't you, Lilly?"

"Yep," answered Lilly, pausing in her occupation of mauling the depot cat.

Before Leander could say anything further the lady from Hoperville had him by the arm and was leading him away. "We'll hustle right around and git married first thing, sugar plum," she suggested, and he, unaccustomed to quick and resourceful action, meekly consented. There was a suggestion of domination in the way she ordered him to "Git a move on and chuck them trunks in," but it wore away on the drive under the spell of that repeated "Lovey duck," which she handed him when he told how much gold he had in

the ground on Snodgrass Gulch. He thought maybe he'd get used to her after a while; but was not without signs of dejection when they reached the cabin.

"So this is it, is it?" she inquired as she looked around. "The Lord be merciful! This is the plague-takedest hole I ever set foot in in my life. Me, Cynthia Blazer, to come to this!" she stormed, throwing her arms in the air. "What's your name—you?" she demanded of Silas who stood in the doorway trying to smile a welcome.

"Why, Sis-Silas!" he stammered, swept from his feet by the suddenness of her verbal assault.

She looked at him scornfully and began to sniff, her trained scent leading her directly to the lard-pail whose cover she lifted at arm's length. She turned on Silas again.

"You jest grab this cheese and take it down in the timber and bury it good and deep."

"But Cynthia——"

"Shut up! My name ain't Cynthia to you—you ape! Jest take this stuff and do as I tell you."

He was glad to escape; but disobeyed the burial notice and hid it in the coal-bin of the blacksmith shop. And that wasn't the end of his work, because far into the night both he and Leander scrubbed and labored, Silas with righteous though not outspoken indignation, and Leander still meek as was his wont. And for a week this cleansing process continued, reaching from the cabin to the "yard" and the stable. "The incumbrance" in the meantime grinned at them sardonically, made faces behind her mother's back, or in her absence goaded them on to more strenuous effort by warning them that they'd "better keep hustlin' or she'd tell maw, and then they could bet they'd ketch it!"

They had hoped to drop into the even tenor of their ways when the cleansing was finished; but on that eventful evening Leander was told to start the fire next morning at five o'clock, so he and "that no-account Si" could get to work by six. Leander expostulated.

"They ain't no two men kin stand it to work underground more'n eight hours a day an' I think——"

"Never mind what you think! Your thinks ain't worth thinkin' nohow. You keep your trap closed and I'll do all your thinkin' for you. If there's gold down there it's got to be digged, and you fellers has got to hump yourselves. If you don't I'll come down there and see that you do hump!"

Another job of forgotten cleaning caused her to change her instructions and order Leander to remain and work around the house; but Silas was hustled away at an hour when he did hate to get up. Discouraged, tired, and wrathful, he passed the day in planning for Cynthia's downfall. The first time he smiled was when on returning from a fourteen hours' shift, he found Leander doing laundry work. He had washed his own as well as Silas' clothes, the sheets, a horse-blanket, and a rag carpet, and the yard was full of things. Silas laughed unguardedly as Leander stiffly straightened the kinks in his weary back.

"After you git a little grub I've got a few things I want you to tend to, you bean-pole with a bunch of celery on top," a wrathful voice screamed, and Silas sneaked away to the wash-basin beside the porch. She threw another bundle into the tub over which her liege lord was again bending, remarking that they were a few garments she'd overlooked. Leander lost his temper.

"I don't mind workin' at most ennything," he said, putting a dripping hand to the beacon on his nose, "but dern me if I'm goin' to do any more washin'. You can jest put that in your pipe and smoke it."

She looked at him in amazement and then burst out: "You big, onery brute, if I was as mean-tempered as you agin' a poor lone woman, I——"

She threatened to burst into tears. Leander apologized profusely, and then with due meekness proceeded with his task. She regained her poise, and after supper was even pleasant.

"Now, Leander," she ordered, "while that shiftless Si's a-washin' the dishes

you sit down here and I'll cut your hair. You look like a Billy goat."

"Oh, maw, let me do it," Lilly insisted, clapping her hands, and Leander shivered.

"All right, honey dove; but be careful and don't cut his years. They look bad enough now." And the incumbrance gleefully went at her task until his cranium looked like a relief map of Madagascar. When she had shorn the Samson, he took one look at himself in the glass, said something that sounded like "hell fired," and retreated to his bunk where throughout the night he fondled his wart and sighed.

He came into the drift the next morning where Silas was putting in a set of timbers, and sat down on a stull, the picture of misery and dejection. It took time for Silas to learn that the incumbrance had playfully pulled his whiskers that morning after pouring molasses on her hands. He got up and moved around at the mouth of the drift as his agitation increased.

"I told Cynth I didn't want that Lilly of her'n monkeyin' with my whiskers no more," he said wrathfully, "and what do you s'pose she said? Says she's goin' to have Lilly chop 'em off! An' I ain't goin' to part with 'em. I've had 'em fifteen year. So there!"

Silas turned his back, and his shoulders twitched.

"Leander," he said after a moment, "I'm goin' down-town to-morrer, no matter if Cynth says I cain't, and I want you to go along. Got to get a suit of clothes and want you to help pick 'em out."

And that a new air of determination was manifest was proven when, on the following day, despite Cynthia's protests, they went gaily away together.

Silas was adroit. He cajoled, persuaded, and induced Leander to take a first nip and—after that it was easy. He succeeded in getting his employer started homeward late in the day, primed to tackle anything from a half-grown wildcat to a full-grown bear. Silas used all his oratorical powers to goad Leander on to desperation, and as he started him toward the house whis-

pered in his ear: "Now while I'm unhitchin' old Badger, you jest go in an' tell her to git off'n the ranch to-morrer mornin' or—you'll eat her alive."

Leander swaggered to the door with the light of a stern resolution illuminating his face, and found Cynthia in an abandonment of rage awaiting him.

"What do you mean, you old scalawag, by sneakin' off and——" she began in high-pitched anger, but the tirade died on her lips in astonishment as he kicked the door shut with such violence that the cabin shook, and let out a hoarse roar.

"Whoop-pee! Shet up, you ole cat! Don' say another word or I'll grab you by your beak an' pull your brains out! Wow! Wooooo!"

The victor of a hundred matrimonial set-tos was not to be vanquished so easily. She threw a stick of stove-wood which Leander skilfully ducked, and it tore away the window-sash as it went out into the night where the chortling Silas decided that "there was a right big argyment in there," and got behind a tree.

Before Cynthia could come again Leander plumped her into a chair with a jarring suddenness.

"You sit down thar and listen to me," he bellowed, "an' if you try any more shanannigan business, I'll chuck you after the wood. I've scrubbed, washed, had my whiskers pulled and gummed with molasses, and then you let that there imp o' Satan cut my hair. Look at it, woman! I wanted to make a good home for you, you ol' Jezebel; but I ain't a-goin' to stand it no longer."

"You know I love you, dearie, and I'll promise to——"

"Shet up! You're goin' to hit the road. You pack your duds and be ready to move in the mornin', an' take that incumbrance with you. You can go to Hopperville, Halifax, or Hell, for all I keer, an' I ain't no choice which one you decide on. Here's money enough to buy tickets to any on 'em."

He threw ten twenty-dollar gold pieces on the table.

"Si'll haul you to town in the mornin', an' if ever I ketch you or that

sugar-tit o' your'n on these diggin's again, I'll have your hides on the fence to dry in less'n an hour!"

He ambled out down the trail declaring that the roof wasn't big enough to hold him until his better half had vacated; and Silas, slipping after, saw that he was all right and merely wanted uninterrupted rest.

He was awakened on the following noon by his factotum who inquired jovially if "his cranium wasn't vibratin' some."

He sat up in a daze of bewilderment and rubbed his hand over the jagged protuberances of hair that covered his head, and then felt to see if the wart was still there.

"I'm mighty sick and thirsty, Si," he murmured faintly. "I must of had a orful load; I hope I didn't rile Cynthy 'cause she's sure got a temper, and when I git up she'll——"

He groaned with dejection and tried to get to his feet.

Silas was orating.

"Cynthy's short but domineering reign is over with. She's gone. I took her an' the incumbrance down with me

in the rig at six o'clock this mornin', with the big tin trunk and all them boxes, put her on the train, and she's gone. Said to tell you she'd decided to go to Hoperville as she know'd you'd go to some of the other places you'd mentioned, an' she didn't want to take any chances o' meetin' you. Yes, sree! She's gone!"

Leander arose to his feet, his face expressing transports of relief and delight. He forgot his swimming head.

"Gone? The Lord be praised! Si, go up an' git your limbugger out an' heat her red-hot ef you wanter. I kin stand it. Fire up the beans, a wash-boiler full ef you want 'em. Hang the expense! An', by the way, Si, afore I come up to the cabin I wisht you'd take that dam' Zozodoes gal off'n the wall an' chuck her in the stove. I'm down on 'sprightly' women. Ef the Lord cares for me arter I'm dead, they ain't a-goin' to be nothin' but black-haired angels in my part of He'vein, and that goes!"

And thus, in one brief outburst, was ended the rebellion on Snodgrass Gulch.



IN THE WOODS

HERE that wide Presence, which in open ways
Diffuses in the glare of common things,
Drowned in the tumult of our temporal days,
Lost in the stress of selfish clamorings,
Regains its Being in the eternal hush;
Gathers in close communion with the trees,
Whispers in thrilling messages that rush
In full-recovered rapture on the breeze.

Listen—and you can hear it singing fine
In threadlike melody along the leaves.
Look—and it leaps in light upon the vine,
Or drips in magic from invisible eaves.
Here throbs the Heart that underlies the world,
Its pulses naked to the leaning breast;
Here stream the primal mysteries, unfurled;
Here are creation's yearnings full confessed.

ANGELA MORGAN.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS

B A FIRST NIGHTER

Comedies of light and laughter to compensate for scenes of gory realism. "The Patriot" cheerful nonsense, in which Willie Collier is seen in his happiest mood. Mabel Barrison and a splendid company of farceurs make "The Blue Mouse" a festival of mirth. Henry Dixey seen in "Mary Jane's Pa," an appealing and wholesome little play. Mrs. Fiske and Holbrook Blinn divide the honors in "Salvation Nell," which pictures sordid life. The Sicilians wonderful in exhibits of unrestrained passion. DeWolf Hopper, Fritzi Scheff, and Anna Held in new musical entertainments



EW YORK has been having a succession of theatrical bloody Mondays. Mrs. Fiske, who is generally regarded as anything but a sanguinary heroine, began it with "Salvation Nell," a play which opens with a murder and ends with a hymn and general redemption. Signora Aguglia, bringing with her a company of players from the slopes of Mount Etna, continued the spectacle of gory realism in a series of exhibitions introduced by "Malia," in which superstition and unholy passion end in murderous assault. Finally, Mr. Charles Rann Kennedy, hitherto the disciple of peace on earth, good-will to men, and author of the remarkably impressive play, "The Servant in the House," with its clarion message of brotherly love, came forward with "The Winterfeast," a tragedy of Icelandic paganism, in which "the hate that kills" is ultimately exemplified in a stage littered with dead bodies.

For all that, the New York theaters have been cheerful enough places for

the greater part of the time, and, in fact, the Emersonian theory of compensation has perhaps never had a better illustration than was to be found in the presence of so much of light and mirthfulness, to atone for so much that was somber, gloomy, and uninviting. Artemus Ward used to say that when he was in prison during the Civil War, the table was liberally supplied with bacon and cabbage, which, according to his way of thinking, was a good variety, for when he didn't want the bacon he could help himself to cabbage. Theatergoers, with a more variable bill of fare, have had greater cause for optimism. From sordid realism they could change almost any night to gentle nonsense, still having something new in the lighter vein to tempt them another evening in the week.

The month, indeed, has been particularly notable for the quality of its lighter entertainments. Of these, Mr. Willie Collier in "The Patriot" and Miss Mabel Barrison with a company of exceptionally adroit farceurs in "The Blue Mouse" have been preeminently amusing. Presently, tagging along toward the end of the month, came a

genuine surprise in Miss Edith Ellis' unusual little play "Mary Jane's Pa," in which Mr. Henry Dixey is appearing with considerable success.

I do not remember a much more amusing evening in the theater than was afforded by "The Patriot" at the Garrick, if I except "The Blue Mouse" at the Lyric, which kept me laughing heartily from the rising to the falling of the curtain.

"The Patriot" is sheer, unadulterated nonsense from beginning to end, but being unpretentious and apparently having no purpose other than to amuse, that is no fault, and cannot be held against it. It was written by J. Hartley Manners and Mr. Collier. The plot is presumably the work of the former, while the lines and the "business" are unmistakably the latter's. For they bear the Collier stamp, which, to any one who knows the comedian and has followed his career, is generally apparent. Needless to say, then, Mr. Collier, though he is enacting the rôle of a transplanted English gentleman, with the high-sounding name of *Sir Augustus Plantagenet Armitage*—which, by the way, is a name that has no business out of Laura Jean Libby or a Drury Lane melodrama—is, in reality, himself, with the addition of a few trimmings. And you probably know about what that self is like—a trim, dapper, well-dressed little person, with a veritable genius for getting into trouble, the injured air of one who feels that he is misunderstood and down-trodden, and a perfectly amazing ability to squeeze through a knot-hole wherever it is necessary for him to come out on top for the purpose of the plot.

In this particular case his troubles begin when a lot of miners, to whom he owes wages, go on strike. He has hopes, but no money, and even in Bull Frog, Nevada, hope too long deferred appears to make the heart grow sick. So, though he makes a long speech, in which all kinds of promises figure, most of the men stand on the issue of "no money, no more work." Then his savior, in the person of an English solicitor, arrives with the news that he is

the heir to a large fortune. When he hints at a condition, *Sir Augustus* blandly remarks: "You try to think of something that I wouldn't do for ten thousand pounds," and hurriedly packs his grip.

When he is next encountered it is as an awkward, uncomfortable, ungainly figure, trying to make an appearance in habiliments and society, for which his long years in the American mining-camp have totally unfitted him. You may remember that when Miss Ellen Terry returned to London after her first appearance in this country, the critics complained that her art had lost much of its delicacy through contact with our ruder civilization. Presumably *Sir Augustus Plantagenet Armitage* is in much the same position. Delicately and aristocratically nurtured in his youth, he has not been able to withstand the coarsening influence of the life in the States, and his tutor in the proprieties of dress and deportment, a part splendidly played by Mr. Reginald Mason, finally gives him up as a bad job. This is just as well, for before the play is over *Sir Augustus* refuses to marry his English cousin, thereby losing the fortune that might have been his. However, by the time he returns to Nevada, his mine has panned out, and he is able to settle down happily with the little American girl to whom his heart has been true from the first.

As a matter of fact, the story is the least of "The Patriot," Mr. Collier's peculiarly dry and pervading humor providing most of the reason for its existence. Miss Helena Collier Garrick, the comedian's sister, has much the same attractive method, and in the rôle of a rather vulgar, but good-natured parvenue person, she scores many laughs throughout the evening.

"The Blue Mouse" is distinctly the kind of a farce which no married man will advise his wife to see, though all the wives will see it, you may be sure, attracted largely by the fame which will come to Miss Mabel Barrison as a result of her immensely engaging performance of the title rôle. When

you remember that Miss Barrison was the awfully girly-girly little person who danced her way so pleasantly as the juvenile heroine in "The Babes of Toyland," and when you hear, as I did, on good authority, that until she appeared in this play her figure had never been imprisoned in nature-destroying stays, you will admit that her emergence as a strictly up-to-date, properly figured, and amazingly coiffured destroyer of domestic harmony, is something of an achievement. As a matter of fact, the selection of Miss Barrison for *The Blue Mouse* was one of the happiest moves the producers could have made, for her apparent innocence does more than anything else to rob the play of what might otherwise have proved unpleasantly suggestive.

Although it is a German farce, it has the Gallie flavor, even if Mr. Clyde Fitch has done all that could be done to purify it. Still a plot that revolves around the efforts of a middle-aged husband to carry on a flirtation with a notorious *Salome* dancer could scarcely develop into anything resembling a Sunday-school lesson, no matter how adroit the handling. And the fact that *The Blue Mouse* openly proclaims that she had considered the advisability of discarding the character of the Biblical heroine for that of *Lady Godiva*, as being more economical in the matter of costume, will indicate pretty clearly the kind of a perfect lady the German authors wanted her to be. But Miss Barrison, with a wide-eyed baby stare, a voice of plaintive innocence, and a manner of most attractive irresponsibility and frankness, does actually succeed in making the mouse appear harmless. Even a very particular sort of woman wouldn't feel the necessity of hitching her skirts aside if she happened to encounter her.

To detail the plot of "The Blue Mouse" would require a diagram rather than a story, with blue-print impressions of double offices and swinging doors, into, and out of, and through which, the half dozen people of the action incessantly swing as mistakes in identity occur. The extreme points of

the laughter come in the second and third acts, in the former of which *The Blue Mouse* is having an auction-sale of the effects in her garishly appointed flat, and in the latter, where confusion becomes worse confounded, with the little dancer's appearance at the home of the man for whose wife she has been mistaken by his flirtatious old employer. Though Miss Barrison's acting provides the chief histrionic surprise of the performance, the honors are not all hers, for Mr. Charles Dickson and Mr. Harry Conor, both capital farceurs, have seldom been seen to such excellent advantage, while Mr. Jameson Lee Finney, Mr. Alfred Hickman, and Miss Jane Laurel do admirable work. There is, too, an exceptionally fine bit of eccentric characterization by Miss Zelda Sears, who follows her success as the amorous old maid in "Girls" with a complete change in type, that is no less amusing and not a whit less true to life.

Edith Ellis, the authoress of "Mary Jane's Pa," hitherto enjoyed the dubious distinction of having written "Mary and John," in which John Mason and Sadie Martinot made a quick, inglorious exit at the Manhattan Theater a season or so ago. The present piece still shows the hand of the novice, and Mr. Dixey's acting is by no means so completely competent as to atone for the play's faults. But, as it stands, it is an unusually genial, wholesome, and, in some respects, novel entertainment, with a central character that occasionally suggests Mr. William J. Locke's "The Beloved Vagabond" and again "Rip Van Winkle," that perennial classic of American literature and drama.

Hiram Perkins, the hero of the romantic idyl which has been so badly named, for the play is far more quaint and delicate than would be suspected from its title, is half poet, half philosopher, a ne'er-do-well, living in a narrow country village, where, until his marriage, he has led a shiftless existence as a printer, a dreamer, and a waster. The appearance of two children, with the consequent responsibil-

ity and interference with his comfort, has been more than he can bear, and, leaving his wife *Portia* to provide for herself and the youngsters as best she can, he has disappeared from home leaving no trace of himself or his intentions.

When the play opens, he has been missing for eleven years. *Portia*, in the meantime, has conducted the printing-office so well that she has been able to support herself and her little family. In addition to job-work, she issues a daily paper, and a complication in her affairs results from the fact that she is unremittingly attempting to defeat a certain candidate for office, favoring, though through no feeling of personal sentiment, a young lawyer who has sought her hand in marriage.

At this point the wanderer returns, and after a short, but stormy, scene, in which his wife reminds him of his worthlessness, is prepared to go away again. Then *Portia*, in a sudden impulse of pity, yet half in jest, too, suggests that, as he has no home, he may remain where he is if he will agree to do the cooking and kitchen-work and allow her to continue the business of the office. Much to her amazement, he agrees to the proposition. Then, as the community is not put into possession of the facts as to his identity, scandalous tongues get busy. A riot is incited by the indignant candidate for office whom *Portia* is opposing, and is only quelled when the wife discloses that the worker in her household is the husband who has been absent all these years.

The play contains much that has long been familiar in rural drama, but it has brightness of line and incident, and the principal figures are very charmingly outlined. There is a pretty sentimental touch in the growing love of the father for his children, particularly the younger, *Mary Jane*, who is at once attracted to him. And the blend of homely philosophy and tender humor comes over the footlights to fasten itself upon the sympathy of an audience; so much, in fact, that it is a pity that it is not strongly supple-

mented by a more genuinely informed and sincere art in acting. The general representation is excellent, however, the self-reliant wife being very nicely played by Miss Anne Sutherland. Miss Marjorie Wood, one of the best of the younger leading women, plays the elder daughter charmingly, and Gretchen Hartmann is very attractive as the youngster of the household.

"The Stronger Sex," in which Miss Annie Russell is appearing at Weber's, is a rather pallid affair, and such success as it has had is owing largely to the popularity of the gracious little actress who plays the leading rôle. As a representative of dainty, appealing femininity, Miss Russell has no superior on the stage, and, though her personality and her talent are such as mark an obviously limited range, within that range she leaves absolutely nothing to be desired. "The Stronger Sex," which is by John Valentine, enjoyed a longer run in London than it is likely to achieve here, the only probable explanation being that there its heroine was played with the artificial Yankee twang, which English audiences like to believe is true American, and which occasionally interests them on account of its unlikeness to anything to which they are accustomed.

Here, of course, Miss Russell, who by the way is an Englishwoman by birth, but who may be said to be American by adoption, makes no attempt to give the character any such "foreign" flavor, and it must stand or fall on its actual intrinsic merit. People who are impulsively patriotic will rejoice in a play in which an American girl, married to a mercenary English lord, puts him through his paces after she learns that he has married her only for her money, not hesitating to "take a gun to him" when he becomes more than ordinarily offensive and unruly. But the feminine *Petruchio* is not entirely convincing, and there is little else to the story to create a strong impression. "The Stronger Sex" is, in fact, rather weak dramatic tea, though Miss Russell's sweetness makes it tolerably palatable.

Stronger fare was provided in each of the three plays mentioned in the opening paragraph. "The Winter-feast" was at once withdrawn, so few, except the highly select assemblage at the opening matinée, had an opportunity, or seemed to have an inclination, to see it. The Sicilian players, too, failed to attract as largely as expected. Mr. Kennedy's play was unquestionably a remarkable work, though unsuited to the restless, pleasure-seeking crowd that throngs the theaters and asks, primarily, that it shall be entertained without too much stress upon its feelings or its intellect. A tragedy which deluges the stage with blood, which is largely declamatory, and in which the action is developed with frequent pause for felicities in thought and diction, is too much of a tax upon its patience. And though the piece was beautifully acted by Miss Edith Wynne Matthison, and the other players of Mr. Miller's specially selected cast, and though it was staged with exquisite sympathy and good taste, its prompt withdrawal was in no manner a surprise even to those of us who were least hesitant about expressing our admiration for it as a work of literature and art.

If it be true that art cannot be divorced from beauty—and I hold somewhat to the notion, though it is not altogether in the fashion—the exhibitions of the Sicilian players cannot be regarded as artistic. But astonishing they certainly are, and warranted to thrill and horrify any spectator not hopelessly blasé. In point of actual variety they had little enough to offer, it is true. The violent primitive passions of men and women are comparatively few, and as the Sicilian players were chiefly employed in reaching down to the bed-rock of human feelings, and generally under much the same conditions in each of their plays, the gamut of emotions was soon sounded. With Mimi Aguglia, love as a physical obsession, pure, unadulterated animal passion, provided the chief motive of each successive rôle. And it must be admitted that, such as it is, hers is a

wonderful exhibit. She throws herself into her rôles, apparently sparing no effort for the time to be what she impersonates, and almost tearing herself to pieces in the process of unfolding the emotions of the character she represents.

In "Malia," well enough described as a village *Phèdre*, she is a wild, irresponsible being, to whom desire has come as an irresistible force that tortures like a consuming flame, and the climaxes of her emotion are tremendous. She gives the impression of a human being bereft of all power of restraint. It is not a pretty spectacle nor one that may be regarded with any particular satisfaction, but, nevertheless, it illustrates most unusual temperamental and reproductive, though never the highest form of, mimetic qualities.

"Salvation Nell" does give Mrs. Fiske opportunities for highly graphic, sympathetic acting, and in most respects her individual performance is as fine as anything she has attempted in recent years, but the play, by Edward Sheldon, a recent graduate of Harvard, is, when reduced to its elements, and shorn of its realistic trappings of scene, a conventional posturing of familiar incidents. Much the same story was told earlier in the season in Owen Kildare's "Regeneration," in which Arnold Daly acted. In that case the reformation of a criminal was effected through the beneficent influence of a district-settlement nurse for whom he developed a sentimental passion.

In "Salvation Nell" the theme introduces two characters to be redeemed, a poor, miserable, poverty-stricken scrubwoman, who ekes out an existence doing chores in the corner saloon, and her lover, Jim Platt, a wretched parasitical loafer, who preys on her earnings whenever he needs money for a drink. He kills a man who has been making overtures to the scrubwoman, and is sent up for a long period. By the time he returns, Nell, who has resisted the temptation of an easy, lucrative profession, held out to her by a blondined inmate of a house

that has been raided by the police, has fallen under the gentle influence of a Salvation lassie, and is tenderly caring for her child, the fruit of her unblessed union with *Jim*. He returns and attempts to drag her down again. In her love for him, she yields to a momentary weakness, but she is soon able to pull herself together, and, as he departs with violent denunciations on his lips, she sinks to her knees with the child, and tells him to pray as he never prayed before. In the final act *Jim's* heart is softened while listening to *Nell* preaching in the streets, and, with a cry to her for help, he prepares to join in her work of saving souls, of which his own is not the least in need of succor.

Such impressiveness as the play has comes from the splendid acting and the remarkably graphic reproduction of scenes in which the poor, sordid beings fight out their existence. The first act shows a cheap whisky-bar in Tenth Avenue, with convincing touches of realism in characters and surroundings, and a final scene, reproducing a congested section of Cherry Hill, with tall tenements, fire-escapes burdened with refuse and old clothes, cellar-shops, and shifting pictures of the motley population, is astonishingly and effectively real. Mr. Holbrook Blinn's performance of the criminal adds another to his long list of splendid characterizations, and he may be truly said to divide honors with Mrs. Fiske. Miss Mary Mad-

ison and Miss Hope Latham are also excellent figures in the cast, the former as a Salvation Army lieutenant, and the latter as a bedizened figure of the streets.

The best of the musical shows of the month was "The Prima Donna," prepared for Miss Fritz Scheff by Victor Herbert and Henry Blossom, also the authors of her previous success, "Mlle. Modiste." The present vehicle is not quite so consistently attractive, but on the whole it provides a good, colorful, interesting entertainment, in which the former "little devil" of Grand Opera is properly able to disport herself.

Mr. De Wolf Hopper, assisted by the very dainty Miss Clark, is, as usual, quite happy in "The Pied Piper," which, however, from being a remarkably clever fantastic comedy by Mr. Austin Strong, has been made over into a commonplace musical show. Most of the elusive charm and loveliness of the original work have been dispelled through the combined efforts of stage-manager, producer, and musical composer.

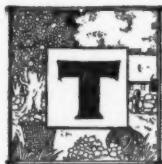
And Miss Anna Held is once more on view, this time in a play called "Miss Innocence," which suggests the pertinent inquiry "What is in a name?" Of course the piece is a travesty of all its name suggests, and, though Ludwig Englander and Harry B. Smith are put down on the program as authors, nature, in the form of woman, is the chief collaborator.



FOR
BOOK
LOVERS

Archibald
Lowery
Sessions

A few words about Ainslee's and its contributors. "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," by John Fox, Jr., possesses a fair degree of interest. Not a pleasant tale but well told is Anne Douglas Sedgwick's "Amabel Channice." In "Long Odds" Harold Bindloss does his best work thus far. The narrative of "Kincaid's Battery," by George W. Cable, is not easy to follow because of its vagueness. Slight and rather flowery is Brian Hooker's "The Right Man." "Over Bemerton's," by E. V. Lucas, has some elements of originality. Not at all bad of its kind is Stanley Portal Hyatt's "The Little Brown Brother." The story of "Corrie Who?" by Maximilian Foster, is spread out rather thinly. "The Distributors," by Anthony Partridge, is well worth reading.



HIS current number of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE is a representative one in the matter of the variety of its table of contents, and, as we need hardly say, in the matter of interest and quality. The types of fiction most important to magazine readers will be found in the stories published this month; stories, the excellence of which, as usual, are not equaled elsewhere.

The complete novel by John Kendrick Bangs is a twentieth-century adventure tale, and as such it has its peculiar interest. The short stories by Mrs. Wilson Woodrow and Miss Marie Van Vorst are specimens of the finished art of story-telling, besides possessing an unusual degree of human interest. The story by Steel Williams, who, by the way, writes only for AINSLEE'S, is a tale of the West. People whose opinions on the subject are entitled to consideration say that these Western tales are the best of their kind published.

The stories of Elliott Flower, Will L. Comfort, E. F. Benson, Roy Nor-

ton, George L. Burton, and Quentin M. Drake—all familiar names to AINSLEE'S readers—are as good as anything they have ever done.

The March number will be the best of the year 1909, thus far. The complete novel will be one of the chief features. Those whose memories go back for several years and are able to recall the story called "The Siege of Sar," will rejoice to know that the author of that remarkable tale, H. F. Prevost Battersby, has written for AINSLEE'S the story which will head the table of contents in March. "The Silence of Men" will interest and charm everybody.

Another important feature will be the first instalment of a three-part serial by Marie Van Vorst, called "In Ambush." It is a story of romantic adventure, thoroughly modern, and told with a reserve that makes it absolutely convincing. Its strength is undoubtedly.

Among the other contributors whose work will be a guarantee to our readers of high excellence are Prince Troubetzkoy, Charles Neville Buck, Steel Williams, Mary B. Mullett, Caroline Duer, and William Armstrong.

A reasonably good story with a fair degree of interest is "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," by John Fox, Jr., published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Readers of Mr. Fox's stories have become familiar with the Kentucky mountain regions and with the types of the inhabitants and their manners and customs, among which moonshining and murder seem to be the most conspicuous if the chroniclers are to be believed.

This latest book is much like those that have preceded it. It could hardly be otherwise if, as Honorable Sam Budd says, its people "are a perfect example of an arrested civilization" who have been doing the same things for over a hundred years and actively combat any suggestions of progress.

John Hale is the modern element in the story. A civil engineer from the East, he comes to Lonesome Cove to locate coal lands. As the representative of twentieth-century ideas his contact with the mountaineers is stimulating both to himself and to them. His interest in the young daughter of one of them and hers in him is what makes the story. He succeeds, with much difficulty, in persuading June Tolliver's father to allow her to be educated, and she is sent away to school, winding up, of course, in New York. He meanwhile, staying on in Lonesome Cove struggling with the primitive conditions of the locality, loses ground as she gains it. Her consciousness of her development results in some unhappy complications when she returns, but the conclusion is all that could be wished for.

The book is full of the sort of incident that is usually supplied by lawless mountain communities, and is, necessarily, not entirely free from battle, murder, and sudden death. Altogether it is not a strikingly original achievement.



"Amabel Channice" is the title of Anne Douglas Sedgwick's new book, published by the Century Company.

As a story it is simpler and more direct than the author's previous work. It is almost wholly lacking in plot or

even incident, but nevertheless it has considerable interest, mostly retrospective.

The narrative brings to a focus the penalty paid by Lady Channice for her early indiscretion in eloping with a fascinating artist not long after her marriage to Sir Hugh. Though she was, as she supposed, forgiven by her husband and reinstated as his wife, she has spent the whole of the intervening twenty years separated from him, her only society being that of her illegitimate son, in loving gratitude for her husband's magnanimity.

The state of mind in which she has lived during this period is finally broken, however, by her discovery of Sir Hugh's unworthiness, and the burden of suffering is shifted from her shoulders to his when he finds that the awakening of his love for her is simultaneous with the loss of hers.

It is not a pleasant tale and its interest is mainly psychological, but it is told in a style which relieves it in a degree of some of its somberness.



Harold Bindloss has written a new story of adventure, located this time, for the most part, on the West Coast of Africa, the action of which is varied by the hero's brief trip to Grand Canary. He calls his book "Long Odds," and it is published by Small, Maynard & Co.

In many respects this seems to us the author's best work thus far. The story is told with a sense of power, a finish, and a reserve that have not before appeared so conspicuously in his previous stories. It may be due to some extent to the elevation of thought necessary to conceive of such a character as Ormsgill, to the nature of the task he set for himself, and to his fidelity to the promise given to his dead partner.

One hardly looks in these days for a white man's self-sacrifice in behalf of men of any other color, least of all black men, such sentiment as is bestowed upon them being mainly a vague

concession to a pretty conceit called, for want of a better name, the brotherhood of man.

In Ormsgill's case, however, it took the very concrete form of a surrender of fortune and love in order to free from slavery a negro woman and a score of negro men in deference to a promise which might have been disregarded with little loss of reputation. The sacrifice seemed great, but he was richly compensated.

The other characters, especially those of Father Tiebout, the Catholic missionary, and Benicia and Desmond, are well drawn, and the descriptions, which have the virtue of being necessary parts of the story, give the impression that Mr. Bindloss knows the conditions of which he writes.



"Kincaid's Battery" is the title of George W. Cable's latest story of the Civil War. It is published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

It impresses one as being a paean in glorification of New Orleans rather than a story, the period and the characters and incidents serving as a background upon which to throw the emotional lights and shadows of the city. The plot of the book, if it can be said to have one, hangs on the love of Captain Hilary Kincaid for Anna Callender, which she rather coyly returns, and the machinations of Flora Vallour, the beautiful creole maiden, who also loves the gallant captain, to separate the lovers. Mr. Cable has no reserves about the fair Flora; he has made her as bad as possible, and that is saying a good deal; but her evil designs are brought to naught and in the end the lovers are happy, after passing through many dangers and tribulations, and Flora gets her just reward.

Something of course had to be said about the Mississippi campaign from Shiloh to the fall of Vicksburg and Mobile, with references to Grant and Farragut, but some familiarity with history is needed to get much out of them in their connection with the tale.

The narrative is not easy to follow because of its vagueness and the constant dropping and filling up of threads.



The Bobbs-Merrill Company publishes a slight tale of Brian Hooker called "The Right Man," which tells how Richard Gordon proved himself the right man for Audrey Dorne, at the expense of John Hudson, to whom she was engaged.

When it is said that Miss Dorne was beautiful and wealthy, that Hudson was "a Captain of Industry and a golf shark," and that Gordon was handsome, young, a college man, and an artist, it is not difficult to understand why Destiny picked him as the right man. And Destiny must have managed it, for the demonstration was made on a five day—or perhaps four and a half day—boat between New York and Boulogne-sur-Mer.

The "right man" wisely began his campaign by reading the lady's thoughts for her entertainment. He looked at her and saw "the amber brightness of her hair against the warm brown of her skin, the indolence of lips and eyes, the almost feline repose in all the long, slow lines of her." He also noted that "the whole personality bore a curious aroma of tension"—the result of his artistic sense of smell probably—"an indefinite potential of the extreme, the impression that belongs to the greyhound and the hothouse rose," and then he told her things which naturally scandalized and angered her. Nevertheless she was interested, and thus was marked the beginning of the end of the Captain of Industry.



"Over Bemerton's" is a new book by E. V. Lucas, published by the Macmillan Company, who say that it "is something more than a story, and it will find its heartiest welcome among those who believe that a novel is not necessarily devoid of ideas and literary quality."

The hero of the story is Kent Fal-

coner, who, returning to London after thirty years' business experience in South America, settles down in quarters over a second-hand book-store to enjoy the leisure of middle life in the satisfaction of cultivated tastes among congenial people. Humor and a good-natured philosophy and a cheerful outlook constitute his equipment, supplemented by "A Chinese Biographical Dictionary," from which he quotes with great freedom. His point of view, modified by his opportunities to observe and by his thirty years' exile, gives a flavor to current events, as for example the suffragette movement, which have the virtue of originality.

Mr. Lucas has made one concession to popular taste in the incorporation of a love-story in his book, a love-story of which Falconer, the middle-aged bachelor, is the hero.



"The Little Brown Brother," by Stanley Portal Hyatt, published by Henry Holt & Co., is a story of the Philippines. It purports also to give an idea of some of the difficulties confronting the American attempt to govern the Islands, although the author states that he wrote it as a "plain story" and disclaims any "ulterior political motive."

As a "plain story" it is not at all bad of its kind, and if American readers, who love tales of adventure, can divest themselves of any prejudices they may have concerning the Philippine problem and party politics at home, they will like the book. It is written by an Englishman with all of the English sense of superiority over the Oriental.

The hero, Derek North, is an Englishman who has left the British army under a cloud, involving no actual disgrace, however, and the heroine is an English girl, domiciled in the Islands with her father. The plot involves an uprising of *pulajanes* in one of the Islands, the intrigues of half-breed officials, the grafting of certain Americans, and the helplessness of the high-minded army officers.

There are some very well-told accounts of collisions between the savage hillmen and the American forces, in which North plays an active part and which threaten Clara Westley and her father. The action of the story, both in the field and in Manila, is well sustained so that the narrative proceeds without a halt and with no diminution of interest. There is, of course, the usual love-story.



"Corrie Who?" by Maximilian Foster, published by Small, Maynard & Co., is a book of over four hundred and fifty pages, over which is spread out rather thinly the story of a young woman's attempt to discover her identity.

It is somewhat surprising to be told that any one can live fifteen or twenty years in New York involuntarily impersonating another and in reasonably close proximity to people interested in the disclosure of the facts and practically under the control of a woman who has misappropriated the funds of an estate. Yet this is the burden of the tale.

Mr. Foster seems to have sacrificed probabilities, construction, and logic, at any rate in the matter of plot, in favor of characterization. And so far as this is concerned he has concentrated his efforts and attention on Mrs. Pinchin and Corrie. The former is a grotesquely wicked individual, elderly, gross, selfish, wilful, the familiar type so often used in fiction, the Diss de Barr type in short, though there is in this tale no suggestion of spiritualism.

Corrie is the fair young victim of this woman's machinations, an heiress of course, and because of that fact possessed and ill-treated for many years by Mrs. Pinchin. As she approaches womanhood the conviction grows upon her that she is not really what she seems, and as she is a person of some spirit she determines to get the facts; and she does, and for her enterprise receives the additional reward of a husband.

There are many other characters,

some of whom serve mainly to confuse the reader. The story has a degree of interest, however, which may be a compensation if one has sufficient leisure to read it.



A story which, in some respects, is rather unique is "The Distributors," of which the McClure Company are the publishers and Anthony Partridge is the author.

Though Mr. Partridge is said to be a newcomer in the field of fiction, there are some indications, in this book as well as in a story published serially under his name called "The Kingdom of the Earth," of a more or less practised hand.

The story is one of plot essentially, to which everything else is subordinated, though the exigencies of the tale make characterization to some degree necessary. It deals with a coterie of smart London men and women, most of them titled, who have formed themselves into a society to which they have given the name of the "Company of Ghosts," and have succeeded in surrounding it with an air of mystery, suggestive of something like degeneracy, in order to cloak their real purposes. Their activity consists in the systematic robbing of the rich to give to the poor.

The story derives its interest chiefly from the activities of a young American woman with an unconquerable ambition to break into London society. Her belief that the "Company of

Ghosts" is the holy of holies leads to her application for membership, and upon her rejection she employs a detective to penetrate its mysteries. The result is a tragedy.

The story is well constructed, the mystery and suspense are sustained to the end, and the ending is satisfactory. The story is a very good one of its kind, and is worth reading.



Important New Books.

"The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig," David Graham Phillips, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Motor Maid," C. N. & A. M. Williamson, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Tono-Bungay," H. G. Wells, Duffield & Co.

"The Winterfeast," Charles Rann Kennedy, Harper & Bros.

"The Lighted Lamp," C. Hanford Henderson, Henry Holt & Co.

"That Pup," Ellis Parker Butler, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Uncle Tom Andy Bill," Charles Major, Macmillan Co.

"A Chronicle of Friendship," Will H. Low, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Roman Holidays," W. D. Howells, Harper & Bros.

"The Living Word," Elwood Worcester, Moffat, Yard & Co.

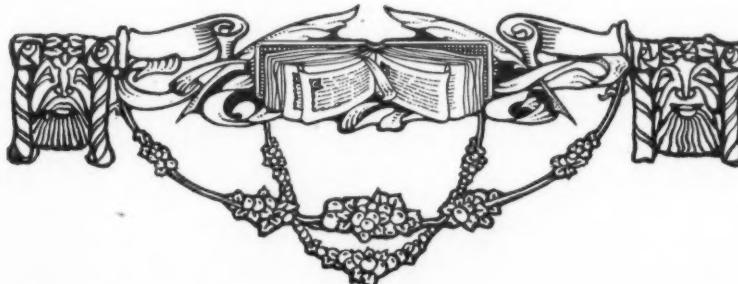
"The Toy Shop," Margarita Spalding Gerry, Harper & Bros.

"Auction Bridge," R. F. Foster, F. A. Stokes Co.

"Manners for the Metropolis," Francis W. Crowninshield, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Wolf Hunters," James Oliver Curwood, Bobbs-Merrill Co.

"The Passer-By," Prince Troubetzkoy, Doubleday, Page & Co.





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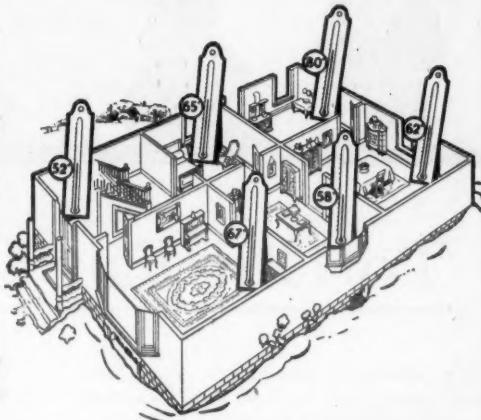
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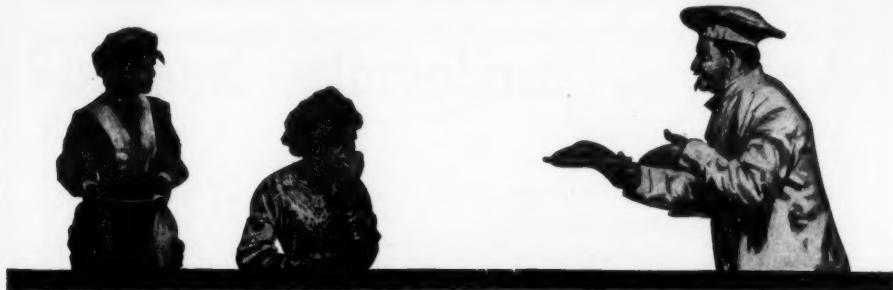
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You housewives who bake your own beans are about our only competitors. Those who buy ready-baked beans naturally choose Van Camp's. So let us discuss home baking.

First, think of the trouble, the time and the fuel. Think how convenient it is to have Van Camp's in the house, ready for instant serving.

Then the digestibility. Your beans are heavy food. They ferment and form gas. For, in a dry oven, you can't apply enough heat.

We bake in live steam—in ovens heated to 245 degrees. We bake in small parcels, so the full heat goes through. Van Camp's beans digest; they don't form gas. You get the whole of their food value.

Then the goodness. Van Camp's beans are mealy, nutty and whole. Steam baking breaks no skins. And Van Camp's are baked with the tomato sauce, so we get a delicious blend.

Thus we give you beans that are better than home-baked, and beans that are better for you.

Van Camp's
BAKED
WITH TOMATO
SAUCE
PORK AND BEANS

Here is Nature's choicest food—84% nutrient. You can't afford to spoil it.

Here is a dish with the food value of meat, at a third the cost of meat. Surely you want your people to like it, and to eat it often.

Here are meals always ready—always fresh and savory.

Please compare your beans with Van Camp's. See which your people like best. See which best digest. After a test you'll never bake beans at home.

Three sizes: 10, 15 and 20 cents per can.

Van Camp Packing Company, Established 1861 Indianapolis, Indiana

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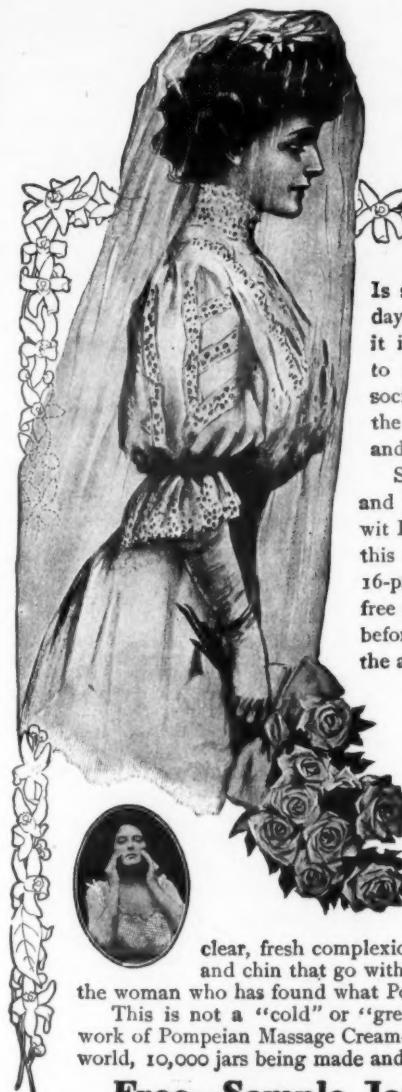
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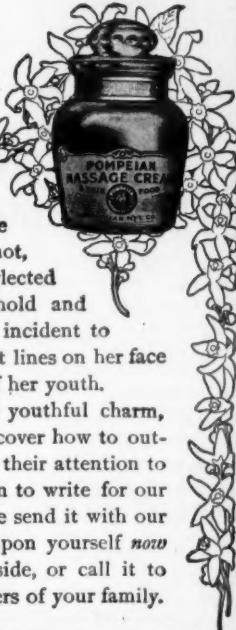
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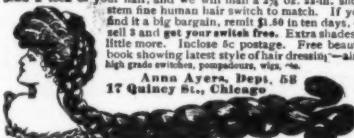
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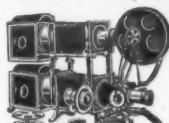


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Ainslee's 2-60



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Ainslee's for March

"THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS"



HE March number of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE will contain two features of overshadowing importance. It is practically impossible to speak of the stories referred to in terms adequate to do justice to them.

The first is the complete novel which is the work of **Mr. H. F. Prevost Battersby** who contributed the story called "The Siege of Sar" to AINSLEE'S in January, 1904, a story which brought unlimited approbation. Mr. Battersby's story in the March number is called

"The Silence of Men"

and shows the improvement naturally to be expected of an author of his abilities. It is written with his peculiar charm of style and has intense dramatic interest throughout.

In the same number will be the opening chapters of a serial story by **Marie Van Vorst** entitled

"In Ambush"

It is, in a sense, a tale of adventure of contemporary interest, with modern American characters and a society flavor. It contains some situations of great power and holds the interest steadily.

The list of short stories embraces themes of more than ordinary variety, handled in a way to make them convincing, entertaining and optimistic.

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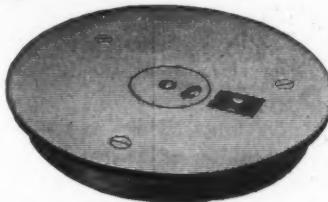
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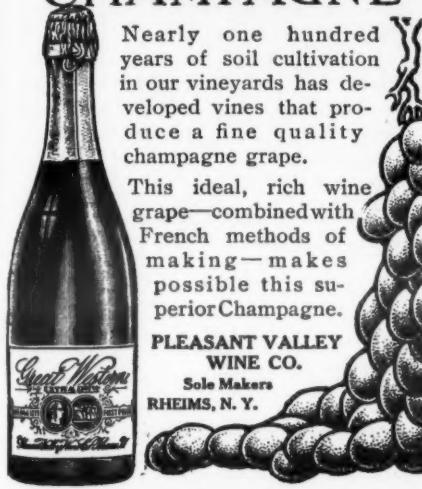


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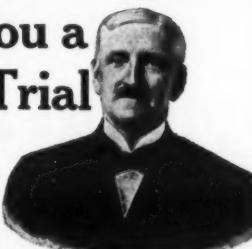
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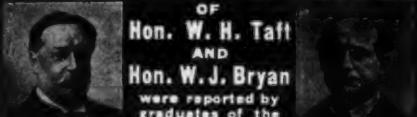


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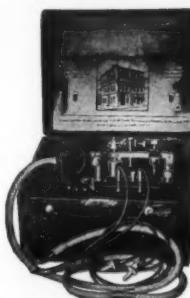
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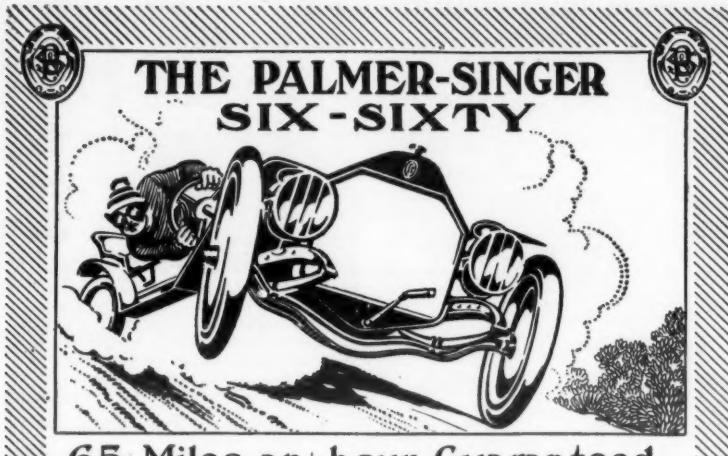
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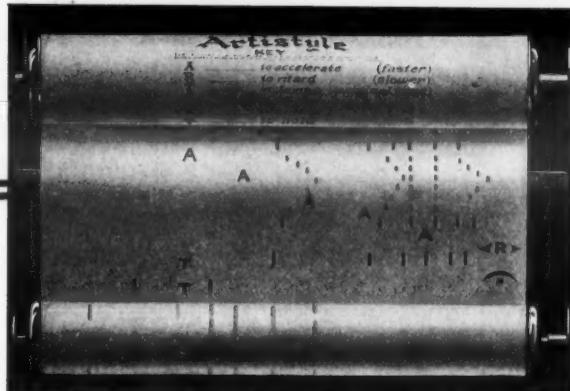


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